

# **ART: THE BASIS OF EDUCATION**

**DEVI PRASAD**

*Dedicated to Acharya Nandalal Bose  
and  
Acharya Binod Behari Mukherjee*

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## Blessings

In Devi's book on art education, he has covered all the aspects of teaching art to children. He has elaborated the technique of art teaching in a natural and beautiful manner. The book also gives an understanding about those children who may develop into artists later in life. Moreover, the author has dealt with the subject of art appreciation by common men and women. Although every man and woman cannot become an artist, it is necessary that there should be arrangements for art education for everyone in society, whichever walk of life he or she may belong to. It is only through such a holistic approach to education that people can understand and sympathize with the joys and sorrows of the artist and artisan and their needs.

Lack of knowledge about art makes people lose their mental balance. The atmosphere of tension and conflict in the world is also due to ignorance about the essence and the essentiality of art in life.

Art education is not a product only of reading books or hearing about art. It develops through seeing great examples of art. Still better, if everyone does creative work with his or her own hands, thus understanding it directly.

A comprehensive discourse on all these subjects has been given in Devi Prasad's book. It will benefit artists as well as common men and women.

-NANDALAL BOSE  
Santiniketan

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(Acharya Nandalal Bose was the founder principal of Kalabhawan, the art institute of Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati, the university founded by Rabindranath Tagore)

## Foreword

My friend and colleague, Devi Prasad, wrote a book on children's art education and suggested that I write the foreword for it. Whenever I see a book with its foreword written by someone other than its authors, I feel somewhat irritated. A good book stands on its own, so much so that after it has been written, it does not require the support of even its own author. So why should it seek anyone else's support?

I tried this argument with Devi Prasad, though I was saying to myself that it would be good to attach my name to the book, which has come out of his deep experience. Actually, he had not to do much arguing to persuade me. I accepted his request and agreed to write the foreword to the book, although I admit that at that time I had not yet read the manuscript. That is because I believe that you can estimate the quality of the work if the author is personally known to you.

I have known Devi Prasad for nearly sixteen years. We were colleagues in Hindustani Talimi Sangh\*. I have had the opportunity of seeing his work as well as seeing him work. I have also seen the work of his pupils. Devi Prasad's personality is identical to the image I have of a good teacher. I cannot fully describe the kind of respect I have for a true teacher. It was on account of this feeling that I wished my name to be associated with his book. Good company always benefits. I have seen the dying glory of a personality being revived. Nothing is quite like the company of a good teacher.

I accepted his request for the sake of such company, and thinking that I should write down some of my thoughts on children's art education, thus securing a little corner for myself in this book. Then I read the book, word by word. It changed my thoughts, when I found that the book contained much more than I had known about this subject. By adding the feeling of love to his experiences, the author has not only made ideas more bright and attractive, he has also put much warmth in them. This book clearly reflects the writer's years of experience, much imagination and genuine love for children. It is a book that should be read by all teachers, not only by art teachers.

The kind of art this book deals with is not that which is taught two or three days a week in classes of an hour or so. It is that art which is a lifelong discipline —a "sadhana". The author has experience of Tagore's world as well as Gandhi's and has the courage of putting life into art and transforming life into an art.

Being a true teacher, Devi Prasad believes in the path of love. Such a perspective has opened for him the windows into the child's life. He has put forward a healthy perspective regarding the child-teacher relationship. Teachers who want to understand these "windows" and the child's world will get much material in this book. It will also remove the confusion about the hierarchical status of different arts especially fine arts and applied arts, and will begin to build links between life and art. It will remind teachers that the artist and the teacher are both yogis. It will make them ask themselves why they are going astray from this yoga-sadhana. This book will make them understand the child and also the crises of adolescence. It will also indicate the means to understand social problems. Society today has itself become stagnant, in an adolescent crisis from which it is unable to emerge.

In our country, only those people write on education who do not like to be teachers. Thank goodness that the trend is changing, and as an old tired teacher, I feel proud that an Indian teacher has written such an enlightening book that gives a feeling of warmth to our colleagues in the teaching world. I hope the teacher who studies this book will gain more understanding and courage to continue his work with the conviction that life is a work of art. I wholeheartedly thank Devi Prasad for giving me the opportunity of reading this book before anyone else.

-ZAKIR HUSSAIN

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Dr. Zakir Hussain was the founder president of Hindustani Talimi Sangh, the Association set up by Mahatma Gandhi in 1937 to work out his scheme of education. He was the Governor of the State of Bihar, and later the President Of India.

## Prelude

This book is based on my fifteen years of practical experience of Child Art at the educational institute of Mahatma Gandhi's ashram, Sevagram, as Art Instructor and the Head of Kalabhawan, within the framework of Nayee Talim, Gandhi's scheme for educational reconstruction of India. Published in 1959, its title was *Bacchon Ki Kala Aur Shiksha*.

In 1962 I was invited to work as Secretary General of War Resisters' International, with headquarters in London. During the years of my work with the pacifist movement, first as Secretary General, and then Chairperson and later, other positions in the International, I had no time to continue my art work. I was too preoccupied with peace activities even to write on art education. However, occasionally I gave talks on the relevance of the intrinsic relationship between creativity and peace at every level of human existence. During my days at Sevagram I had known that enduring peace of an individual, both in social and political matters, can be achieved only through an education which made the individual predisposed to peace; as Maria Montessori said: "If at some time the child were to receive proper consideration and his immense possibilities were to be developed, then a Man might arise for whom there would be no need of encouragement to disarmament and resistance to war because his nature would be such that he would not endure the state of degradation and of extreme moral corruption which makes possible any participation in war."<sup>1</sup>

Although it would not be totally correct on my part to say it, during those years I 'did forget about the book, almost completely. Nevertheless, I always had a feeling that it occupied a corner in that part of my memory which stored things that were not required for the time being but were nevertheless important. That made me keep my eyes and mind open to the developments in the field of art and education taking place in the West during the period of more than two decades of my stay there.

I returned to India for good at the very end of 1983. After a few months, or maybe a year, a very dear friend gave me a photocopy of a clipping from a Hindi magazine of an article with the title "To Be Forgotten!" It was written by Professor Krishna Kumar of the University of Delhi. I quote: "...A few days ago I found Devi Prasad's book *Child Art and Education* by purely a welcome accident... Written by an accomplished artist and art teacher on the basis of his personal experience in the Sevagram educational institute, having a deeply experimental orientation, it is undoubtedly a classic in the field of education. Classics are those which remain always available on account of their permanent importance... This book does not appear even in the catalogue of its publishers. Having been written in a language in which books do not receive their due respect, it has been forgotten.."<sup>2</sup>

The article reminded me of a suggestion that had been occasionally made by several friends and colleagues. The suggestion was that I should try to publish in English, so that it would be available to many more people. I also remembered that after a couple of years of its publication in 1960-61 was told by a German friend that a group of teachers in Hamburg had been studying the book with the help of someone there who knew Hindi well enough to assist the group in going through it in detail. I was told that the group had "found it very useful".

When I visited Hamburg in the early sixties, I met this group. They too made the same suggestion. At that time, I was not in a position to take up the task. When I returned to India and read Prof Krishna Kumar's article I felt that I should act on the suggestion and write the book in the English language. Some other friends too encouraged me to make the effort.

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<sup>1</sup> From the message sent by Maria Montessori to the International Congress Against War and Militarism, held in Paris in August, 1937

<sup>2</sup> *Dinaman*, 25-31 October, 1981

The first thought that came to my mind was that I would go through the book carefully and thoroughly assess its relevance before starting to work on it. I had to be sure that its publication made sense in the contemporary educational scenario. Secondly, it was necessary to find out if there was a need to add some new material or take out what was not relevant any more. I went through the book three times and found that, by and large, the approach, analysis and contents of the book were as relevant today as they were 38 years ago. The thesis on which the book was based was crucial for the reconstruction of most of the educational systems nearly everywhere in the world.

Before I began working on it I had thought that a straightforward translation would do the job. But as soon as I started the work I faced some problems. The question of language was the most important one. Having been written for the Hindi speaking world, it had its own stylistic character. Hence, the idea of straightforward translation was totally other friends too encouraged me to make the effort ruled out. The book had to be, in fact, "rewritten" in English.

The second problem was presented by what was supposed to be a new approach that was developing in the West. It seemed to be based on the realization that allowing children to express themselves freely, with as little interference as possible, was not educationally sound. This approach suggested that what people like Franz Cizek and many educationists had experienced and were advocating—creating an atmosphere in the school as well as in the family in which the child could express his feelings, experiences, and dreams with freedom and without inhibitions for the fuller development of the child's personality—was wrong. The argument was that the child must be taught the right things from his very early years.

Of course, I did not mean that the child has to be left entirely to his own resources. The principles of dealing with child art demand much more from the teacher (and parents) than merely teaching how to execute a certain job. The responsibility of the teacher is much greater in a situation where genuine freedom from fear and inhibitions is allowed to the child who is encouraged to express himself through the languages which are more effective than the language of words, particularly at that stage of the life of an individual. Educators should know that even at the later stages of life there are several feelings and experiences which can be expressed only through these languages of form and sound.

There are occasions when the child needs support and assurance. Only a teacher who knows about the needs of childhood and has love and respect for children, can give the desired guidance for the fullest possible growth of their personality. The teacher who wants the child to grow quickly into adulthood and feels the pressure to teach the right things, becomes a hindrance to healthy growth. In the process of rewriting the book I had to put due emphasis on these aspects of art education.

During the past few decades much effort has been made to encourage children to do art work. In many countries, exhibitions of children's art work are being organized and prizes for the best works are distributed to child-artists. Literature on children's art and its teaching is being regularly published in good quantity. Most schools in the Western countries have art sections for the teaching of art to children. Evidently, it is a good development in the field of child education. However, it has created a misleading notion, i.e., that the educational world has gone in the correct and desired direction by introducing art activities as one of the subjects in the school curriculum, and that what people like Franz Cizek and Rabindranath Tagore had asked for has been achieved. In other words, the notion is that art is now playing its due role in the growth of the child's personality.

I have no doubt that the introduction of art activities has provided some joy in the school life of many children. But is that all that was behind the proposals made by educational thinkers like Herbert Read, who, in the forties, were anxious to see art playing its role in the development of the child's (and the adolescent's) personality in its fullest and healthiest manner? Did they not ask for a complete rethinking of the educational practices that had developed in the industrial society?

During my recent visit to Britain I met some people who felt that art is already playing its expected role and that it has brought good results. According to many of them there is not much that needs to be done to promote the philosophy -which advocates art and creativity to be the basis of educational planning. At the same time, I also met some teachers who were serious about art being more than just a source of entertainment for the child. I had some discussions on the thesis I am advocating in this book with a small group of teachers, who also looked at the typescript of the book which I had carried with me. Later, someone who had been listening to our conversations told me that the teachers were thrilled with our discussions and the contents of the typescript. They felt that there was definitely an urgent need for such literature. I was encouraged on learning their response, especially because I felt assured that motivated and informed teachers were looking forward to guidance, both theoretical as well as practical, to transform art education into something that should help the child to become a well fulfilled individual predisposed to peaceful living, as Maria Montessori had indicated in her message to the International Congress Against War and Militarism.

Another issue was related to the question of gender. Until I reached nearly halfway through the writing I was using the expression *his or her* and *he or she*. I am generally conscious about the sexist nature of the language I am using. Writing in Hindi, this was not much of a problem, but it sounded ridiculous when I read through the rough English text. The expressions *he or she*, and *his or her* was so repeatedly used that it hurt the ears. Therefore I decided to use only *he or his* wherever necessary, and hoped that readers, rightly against sexism in language, will not mind my inconsistencies.

Although the preface written for the original version was adequate in itself, I felt it necessary to write an additional preface for this edition. It was particularly necessary to justify my response to the demand to rewrite the book. I hope it will help teachers and parents in understanding the need of their children to be able to express themselves more fully and enjoy and benefit from art activities as the most effective way to the road to peace and fulfilment.

Some of my friends have been very helpful in reading and editing the manuscript. Usha Chadda, herself an educator and Akash Dharamraj, psychotherapist, did the preliminary editing, Usha Abrol, Regional Director, NIPCCD Bangalore read a few chapters at the beginning and gave very helpful suggestions and my wife Bindu Prasad, special educationist and clinical psychologist, was consistently looking into the manuscript. I am indeed very grateful to them for their valuable assistance. I am also thankful to my son Sunand Prasad for his valuable help in preparing the typescript of the book from the floppy/ disk I had prepared on computer.

April 13, 1997  
PRASAD

DEVI

## Preface

*The artist is not a special kind of man but every man is a special kind of artist<sup>1</sup>*

I had my primary education in a school which was a typical example of one of the most anti-education educational systems created by colonial rule in nineteenth century India. The most vivid memory I have of that period is that for some reason or another, or perhaps for no reason at all, our teachers never hesitated to give us corporal punishment, which made us hate the school. There was nothing in the school that could create in us an interest in any subject or activity. I do not remember enjoying even a moment of my time in it. Later I was moved to the primary section of an intermediate college founded on the Aryasamaj ideals. Luckily this school had a carpentry class as an extracurricular activity.

The family moved to a new house situated in open and better surroundings. The new place was partly renovated before we moved in and partly afterwards. I was almost nine at the time and was fascinated by the work the craftsmen were doing. Both the head mason and the carpenter, were very good craftsmen and tolerant people. They did not mind my sitting and watching them work and meddling with their tools. This experience was enough for me to take an interest in carpentry at school. So much so, that I gradually collected enough tools of my own, bought with my pocket money, to be able to make things for the house. I also became interested in keeping the wood work of the house especially the doors and windows—clean and well painted. Later I even became interested in drawing and painting, a subject which I took for my college education after finishing school.

In spite of a boring, nay hateful, primary education I think I had a more or less happy childhood although I was not conscious of it at the time. It only became clear to me, during my student days in the art college at Santiniketan, when I saw the happy faces of the ashram school-children and later when I did my teaching/research work as a part of the educational scheme initiated and guided by Gandhiji in Sevagram. I realized that if during my childhood I had not had the opportunity to "meddle" with the tools and the raw materials of the craftsmen who renovated our house, I would not have developed the taste for "making things"! Without this experience would I have understood children's nature, as I think I did in later life, I often wonder!

The principles of education worked out by Tagore had totally rejected the notion and practice of teaching based on textbooks. For Tagore, education was a process of learning rather than a mechanical method of thrusting information into, what are supposed to be, the empty minds of children and adults. According to Tagore, the best textbook is life itself, and nature, of which we are an integral part; so also our cultural heritage and its significance in the ongoing processes of our lives. To put it in a nutshell, there are three centres of education: mother-tongue, nature and creative activities. The system of education the colonial rulers had developed in India not only ignored these elements, it totally ruled out their place in the processes of education at all levels.

Looking at the lives and expressions of the children of the Sishu-Vibhag (pre-school) and Patha-Bhawan (primary school) of Santiniketan, and spending some time with them, I understood that the school can and must be a place of joy and creativity. My art education in Kalabhawan (art college) under Acharya Nandalal Bose and Acharya Binod Behari Mukherjee enhanced my understanding of this truth. That was the inspiration and strength behind my experiments with child-art in the Sevagram educational institute.

I was fairly well aware of Gandhi's ideas on art. He was closer to Tolstoy than to Tagore—a bit too puritanical for someone like me, who had experienced life as a young artist in an atmosphere created and

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1. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy : 'Nature of Mediaeval Art' in *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, Dover Publications, 1956, p. 112

nurtured by Tagore. Tagore believed that for a healthy development of personality and human relationships, bread and art are inseparable aspects of life. Tagore and Gandhi were aware of their so-called differences. Yet they were very close to each other on all matters of consequence, the truth of which I continuously realized in my life.

Within a few months of my graduation from Santiniketan I joined the team working for the development of Nayee Talim ("new education" as it was named by Mahatma Gandhi himself in its second and the final stage). Initially I took up the job for six months. It was for the duration of the teachers' training camp organized by Hindustani Talimi Sangh (the organization founded in 1937 for carrying out the Nayee Talim scheme) to start work along the lines of the thinking Gandhiji had come to during his last imprisonment. He was released in early May, 1944. A basic school was already functioning in Sevagram since 1937, when the Gandhian education scheme for children between seven and fourteen years of age was first launched.

This was the beginning of the second phase of Nayee Talim. Explaining his scheme to the Hindustani Talimi Sangh Conference held in Sevagram in January, 1945 Gandhiji said: "Although we have been working for Nayee Talim all these years, we have so far been, as it were, sailing in an inland sea which is comparatively safer. We are now leaving the shores and heading for the open sea. So far, our course was mapped out. We have now before us uncharted waters, with the Pole Star as our only guide and protection. That Pole Star is village handicrafts."

"Our sphere of work now is not confined to Nayee Talim of children from seven to fourteen years: it is to cover the whole of life from the moment of conception to the moment of death..."<sup>2</sup> He was very clear that this new line of action was going to take all our energy and dedication. Even as a fresher in the field I had realized almost from the very beginning that it was probably going to be very tough, but it -was the greatest and most revolutionary experiment in educational planning for our country.

It was my good luck that I had my college education in Tagore's Santiniketan. Our two seniormost colleagues E.W. Aryanayakam and Asha Devi Aryanayakam also had been close associates of Tagore. Asha Devi took a keen interest in my experiments and supported me throughout. She also encouraged me to write occasional articles for publication in the institute's official journal Nayee Talim, which, by the way, helped me in working out the plan of this book.

I became convinced that the experiments I was going to conduct should fully incorporate, in a balanced and integrated manner, the educational principles propagated by both Gandhi and Tagore. It may be worth mentioning here that the first syllabus-for teaching art in Basic Education—as Nayee Talim was called—in 1937, was prepared with the help of Acharya Nandalal Bose. It was a take-off point for me, but only a takeoff point.

Although they were inspired by the Gandhian spirit and the spirit of experimenting with the principles of Nayee Talim, most of our colleagues had no clear notions about the place of art in the processes of education. Art to them was some kind of skill or a collection of skills to decorate various aspects of life or painting pictures, making-sculptures, etc. for so-called public education or propaganda, or producing different kinds of functional artefacts. As a "specialist" in the field and one who was trying to discover a much wider role that art could play in the development of the full personality of the child, I had to face various problems, practical as well as theoretical. I was in need of clarity and support at the same time.

I wrote a letter to Gandhiji for guidance. He sent me a written reply in which he mentioned my teacher Nandalal Bose as an artist who "comes very close to my ideal..." In relation to my work he said: "Bread comes first and adornment afterwards. That has always been my belief. But since you are here, do

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2. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.79, Navjeevan Trust, Ahmedabad, 1980, p.23

whatever you conveniently can. Learn here what true art is... There is therefore a place for true artists in Nayee Talim..."<sup>3</sup> Did Gandhiji give me a long enough rope for carrying on experimentation in my own way? I believe he did, but I do not know for certain. However, I am convinced that he wanted me to do my work in the manner I thought best. This letter was indeed a great encouragement to me and a source of self-confidence. I was able to stand firm on my principles whenever other colleagues failed to understand my approach and work.

As art instructor I considered my task to be of a multifarious nature. It included discussions with teacher trainees on the place of art in education and the role art has in society and the life the individual; children's art of drawing, painting and clay modelling etc., the principles' and methodology of teaching art to children; and teaching the abc of drawing and painting to the teachers themselves. The Ashram school and its primary section in the Sevagram village were ideal places for the trainees to practice teaching. The Ashram school became my laboratory for experimenting with Child Art. Then, of course, there were our own school teachers who needed orientation as well as instruction in relating art as such to the rest of the school subjects and hostel activities. Neither the school teachers nor the trainees had any previous experience in regard to these subjects.

As a matter of principle, Nayee Talim puts the maximum emphasis on the aspect of self-reliance for the individual as well as the community, and on social relationships. As an experiment in education for the whole country, it was eminently clear in our minds that our school should not possess any such equipment or conventional buildings which schools in the six hundred thousand villages of the country could not afford. Instead of considering it a handicap, I used to think of Tagore's thoughts on this question expressed in his essay *My School*:

"There, are men who think that by the simplicity of living introduced in my school I preach the idealization of poverty which prevailed in the medieval age... But seen from the point of view of education, should we not admit that poverty is the school in which man had his first lessons and his best training? Even a millionaire had to be born hopeless and poor and to begin his lesson of life from the beginning. He has to learn to walk like the poorest of children, though he has means to afford to be without the appendage of legs. Poverty brings us into complete touch with life and the world, for living richly is living mostly by proxy, thus living in a lesser world of reality. This may be good for one's pleasure and pride, but not for one's education. Wealth is a golden cage in which the children of the rich are bred into artificial deadening of their powers. Therefore in my school, much to the disgust of people of expensive habits, I had to provide for this great teacher—this barenness of furniture and materials—not because it is poverty, but because it leads to personal experience of the world..."<sup>4</sup>

One of the essentials for me was to understand the basic philosophy of Nayee Talim as Mahatma Gandhi meant it to be. Unlike any other educational system or institution, in Nayee Talim, no subject or activity could be considered in isolation, outside the context of the life and environment around. Moreover, for the balanced development of the personality of the child, the growth of the mind and the body should be inter-linked and integrated. To this end, one of the significant aspects of Nayee Talim was its approach to teaching. Most of the subjects related to intellectual growth. For example, arithmetic, history, geography, science, language etc. were correlated with the meaningful manual work that the children and their teachers did for an average of three hours a day. Similarly, all manual-creative work was treated intelligently. This implied reallocation of priorities of the contents of teaching. Hence, the question I had to ask myself was: Could I treat the teaching of art to children in isolation—as a subject totally independent of other subjects or activities?

There was yet another question that forced me to work out a fresh strategy and the way I should plan my work as an art teacher. Was it practically possible to have a special art teacher in every school in each

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3. ibid., p. 193

<sup>4</sup> Rabindranath Tagore 'My School', A lecture delivered in the United States of America (1916), in *Personality*, Macmillan, London, 1917

village of the country? The straight forward answer was: No! Moreover, was having a special art teacher in every primary and middle school essential? At the beginning I had no answer to these questions, but it came to me after working for a few years with children. I realized that the teaching of art in Nayee Talim was different from the way it was taught in ordinary, or even so-called progressive schools. It could surely not be like that of art schools, for the aim was not just to teach drawing and painting etc. It was much more than teaching the skills that are associated with arts and crafts as they are understood today.

I had to work out two things in my mind. First, it was necessary to define and clarify what actually was the purpose of art education. Secondly, apart from drawing up a syllabus and the methodology for art teaching, it was important to identify those activities in which art could play its creative role? The Sevagram school was a residential institution, which meant that it provided more opportunities for introducing an aesthetic aspect to the lifestyle of the community.

Very few artists can be teachers, and fewer still can be really good art teachers, particularly for children. Based on my own observation I have found that art teachers—artists trained in art schools—generally speaking, tend to impose their own notions and forms on children. They try to "teach" rather than create the required atmosphere for children to express themselves through line and colour, clay or wood, etc. After years of experience I have come to the conclusion that for children under ten or twelve years of age, a teacher who is not an artist but who understands children, and the beauty and nature of their art, can be a better-art teacher than one who may be a good artist but does not understand the child. A teacher who is able to give proper guidance to children upto the age often or eleven is more likely to be a good teacher of art. So also for children into the beginning of their adolescence.

I have seen teachers who did not possess even the minimum skill of drawing but who had knowledge of child-art, who appreciated and enjoyed it, and who fully identified themselves with the needs of children, being very good art teachers for children. Only such teachers can nurture the creative spirit and artistic talents of children. The point to note here is that at that stage the question of teaching techniques or special skills does not arise. What children need from the teacher is encouragement, proper material, class management and companionship. If such a teacher happens to be a good artist it will surely be an asset, but it is a rare thing to happen. Moreover it is not that essential.

So, one of my objectives was to try to impress upon the class teachers to develop an attitude and perspective which would give them the confidence required to guide children in their art activities also. It would require them to learn the psychogenesis of child art, learn to believe that children's drawings are not just scribblings or splashes of colour, they can be beautiful artistic creations. Moreover, these creations open the window into the world of the child and his inner life to a great extent. By this statement I do not imply that the status of children's art is the same as that of Ajanta. or the Sistine Chapel. Nonetheless, I do mean that it can be real good art and that it should be treated with understanding and respect.

There are two manifestations of art education. One is similar to that of the artist's creations: painting, sculpture, music and dance etc. The second is that which finds expression in all our conscious and unconscious movements and behaviour. Both are essential for making life balanced and creative.

There are some who believe that there should not be a separate provision for artistic expression in the form of painting, sculpture and dance etc. because real art should find its expression in our daily life. It should not have a "superficial" existence. Such a puritanical approach lacks understanding of human nature and of the function of art in life.

Some people consider art a useless activity because it does not always provide enough for a physically comfortable life. They even think that being a useless activity, it should not have any place in education. Nandalal Bose has the following to say about this kind of attitude: "People who say that art does not provide a good livelihood should remember one thing... There are two aspects of art. One gives joy and the other gives money. One is called 'arts' (*Charushilpa*) and the other 'crafts' (*Karushilpa*). Charu-shilpa

liberates us from the narrowmindedness created by the pains and tensions of day-to-day life. Karushilpa not only makes our life-journey beautiful by making the objects of daily use beautiful by its golden touch; it also gives us our daily bread. Our country is being impoverished by the decline of our crafts..."<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, art has been divorced from our daily lives. It no longer makes any impact on our inner life. Even in the lives of artists themselves, one hardly sees any harmony between their creations, personalities and lifestyles. It seems that an artist's art activity and private life have nothing to do with each other. Art is becoming an object of luxury for the rich and the indulgent. It is probably for that reason that some social revolutionaries do not consider art as an essential part of life. In fact, some even think of it as undesirable. They do not realize that the dislocation that has occurred in human unity is to a great extent due to the fact that the absence of art experiences has resulted in unfulfilled lives.

According to Indian philosophy, the artist was considered a yogi, as Coomaraswamy wrote in *The Dance of Shiva*: "... important part once played in Indian thought by the concept of Art as Yoga... It will be remembered that the purpose of Yoga is mental concentration, carried so far as the overlooking of all distinction between the subject and the object of contemplation; means or achieving harmony or unity of consciousness."<sup>6</sup>

Some educators do give a place to art education in their educational systems, not because they think that art is one of the important sources of joy and fulfilment in life but because they consider it to be a leisure-time activity, a hobby. According to them most of the active time of the individual should be spent in "useful" pursuits and the rest in other activities. One needs some relaxation after working on useful matters. Such relaxation should be obtained by taking to fine arts. These educators go as far as to say "Without painting, sculpture, music, poetry, and the emotions produced by natural beauty of every kind, life would lose half of its charm."<sup>7</sup>

For such educators, the aim of art education is to deal with the superficialities of life, nothing more than an ornamentation of the life of drudgery and strain caused by engaging in the "important" pursuits of life. Herbert Spencer continues: "So, far from regarding the training and gratification of the tastes as unimportant, we believe that in time to come they will occupy a much larger share of human life than now. When the forces of Nature have been fully conquered to man's use, when the means of production have been brought to perfection, when labour has been economized to the highest degree, when education has been so systemized that a preparation for the more essential activities may be made with comparative rapidity, and when, consequently, there is a great increase of spare time, then will the beautiful, both in Art and Nature, rightly fill a large space in the minds of all."

Herbert Spencer was a very influential and respected philosopher and educator of 19th century Britain. He pronounced: "Accomplishments, the fine arts, *belles-lettres*, and all those things which, as we say, constitute the efflorescence of civilization be wholly subordinate to that instruction and discipline on which civilization rests. As they occupy the leisure part of life, so should they occupy the leisure part of education"<sup>8</sup>

This thought, that art and art education are related to leisure, is responsible for making art a *dasi* (maid-servant) of the rich and the indulgent. It has created a gap between the life of the common citizen and the life of the rich who can afford time and money. Thus the term "cultural activities" was coined. The more leisure time one can afford for such activities, the more cultured he or she is supposed to be.

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<sup>5</sup> Nandalal Bose: *Place of Art in Education in ShilpaKatha* (Hindi translation from the original Bengali, Sahitya Bhawan Ltd., Allahabad) 1952, p.29

<sup>6</sup> Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Shiva*, Farrar & Giroux, reprint by Sagar Publication New Delhi 1968. p 5-26

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Spencer: *Education*, Watts and Spencer, 1945, p.35

<sup>8</sup> ibid., p.37

As a result of separating art education from day-to-day living, life has lost its joy; and to overcome the fatigue caused by "more important work", art has been made into an object of recreation. Instead of remaining a life-giving force, art has become a slave. A slave can provide only physical comfort, it cannot give the sense of inner fulfilment which is an essential part of a well developed personality. Art now is a luxury that only the rich can afford. And it is probably for this reason that many a social and spiritual leader rejects the idea of art being given an important place in life. It is a tragedy that they see it only as an object of indulgence, rather than a way of life in terms of social, aesthetical and spiritual energy.

Herbert Read puts it as follows: "But when, as nowadays, we speak of the problem of leisure, we are not thinking of securing time or opportunity to do something—we have time on our hands, and the problem is how to fill it. Leisure no longer signifies a space with some difficulty secured against the pressure of events, rather it signifies a pervasive emptiness for which we must invent occupations. Leisure is a vacuum, a desperate state of vacancy—a vacancy of mind and body. It has been handed over to the sociologists and the psychologists; to such specialists it is more than a problem. It is disease.

"The existence of most people is divided into two phases, as distinct as day and night. We call them work and play. We work for so many hours a day, and when we have allowed the necessary minimum for such activities as eating and shopping, the rest we spend in various activities which we call *recreations*, an elegant word which indicates that we do not even play in our hours of leisure, but spend them in various forms of passive enjoyment which we call *entertainment*—not playing football, but watching football games; not drama, but theatre-going; not walking, but riding in an automobile.

"We have, therefore, not only a hard-and-fast distinction between work and play, but equally hard-and-fast distinction between active play and passive entertainment. It is precisely this decline of active play—of amateur sport—and the enormous growth of purely receptive entertainment that constitutes a sociological problem. If the greater part of the population, instead of indulging in healthy sports, spends its hours of leisure in dark and crowded cinemas, there will inevitably be a decline in health and physique. And in addition, there will be psychological problems, for we have yet to trace the mental and moral consequence of a prolonged diet of sentimental or sensational films."<sup>9</sup>

Herbert Read insists: "We have to live art if we could be affected by art. We have to paint rather than look at paintings, to play instruments rather than go to concerts, to dance and sing and act ourselves, engage all our senses in the ritual and discipline of the arts. Then something may begin to happen to us: to work upon our bodies and our souls."<sup>9</sup>

We know that science has also been made a slave; it has been used for creating the most destructive kind of weapons of war, which every minute threaten even the survival of life on the earth. It has also provided human kind with all kinds of means of luxury and indulgence, which have resulted in grossly aggravating the inequalities that exist in society, instead of eradicating them. And yet people are not able to be discreet in the management of science. They want education to be totally geared to the physical sciences. Educational institutions long to build the most modern and fully equipped science laboratories; but they consider it extravagant to have a proper art studio which would carry the same prestige as a science laboratory. Such an art studio in a school can give children the experience of joy which only art can.

Human beings start experiencing creativity from a very early stage in life. Unfortunately, the inherent creativity of childhood gradually disappears in later years. Given the social structure and values nurtured by the so-called modern educational system, which ignores the role of art in the development of the personality of the child, his or her natural creativity tends to end with the beginning of adolescence. If that quality in children is to be retained, the educational system that exists today must be totally overhauled, nay, revolutionized.

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9. Herbert Read: *Education for peace*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1950, p.29-31

Gandhi and Tagore had a vision of a liberated human being. That vision can be realized only through an educational approach, based on creativity in which the aim of every activity is the affirmation of the unity within the individual's personality and, at the same time, the unity of all humanity. In other words, art has an essential role to play in the educational process, the aim of which is human unity.

Emphasizing the role art plays in liberating the personality, Herbert Read says: "A child's art, therefore, is its passport to freedom, to the full fruition of all its gifts and talents, to its true and stable happiness in adult life. Art leads the child out of itself. It may begin as a lonely individual activity, as the self-absorbed scribbling of a baby on a piece of paper. But the child scribbles in order to communicate its inner world to a sympathetic spectator, the parent from whom it expects a sympathetic response.

"Too often, alas, it receives only indifference or ridicule. Nothing is more crushing to the infant spirit than a parent's or a teacher's contempt for those creative efforts of expression. That is one aspect of a process which disgraces the whole of our intellectualized civilization and which, in my opinion, is the root cause of our social disintegration. We sow the seeds of disunity in the nursery and the class room, with our superior adult conceit. We divide the intelligence from the sensibility of our children, create split men (schizophrenics, to give them a psychological name), and then discover that we have no social unity."<sup>10</sup>

We begin our lives with the closest possible unity of mother and child, the foundations of which are emotional love. Tagore wrote about the growth of human unity through the growth of love beginning from the love of the mother and the baby to the love for the immediate family, then to the extended family and ultimately to universal love. If the educational processes are created to aim for the unity of the whole of humankind, the process will be a gradual one, i.e. the unity of the family should be extended to the school and then by stages to the community and then to life as a whole. But the foundations of this unity are laid in creativity which is the most important aim of art education.

The source of creativity is in nature and we discover it by being creators ourselves; as artists, painters, dancers, carpenters, sculptors etc. We also discover that our creativity manifests itself in its best form when it is carried out in the spirit of togetherness working together and living together, as this too is the pattern of nature.

I soon realized that as teacher, one of the important steps I had to take was to introduce children at an early stage of their education to the play of harmony and rhythm in nature, for these elements penetrate deeply into the mind and take a powerful hold on the fresh and open mind of the child. This realization came to me also because of my Tagorean background. Tagore made a significant distinction between *knowing and internalizing*.

"We have come to this world to accept it, not merely to know it. We may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy with all existence..." He pleads: "...childhood should be given its full measure of life's full draught, for which it has endless thirst. The young mind should be saturated with the idea that it has been born in a human world which is in harmony with the world around it..."<sup>11</sup>

I found art education fulfilling three purposes simultaneously. The first and foremost was the aspect that is so adequately presented in the words have already quoted from Tagore and Read—the aspect of creativity. Secondly, the practical aspect which is related to the forces that direct the development of skills, such as the skill to see, measure or plan. The third, equally important and useful side of art education I found was its diagnostic potential.

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10 ibid., p.119-20  
11 . Rabindranath Tagore

I was repeatedly fascinated by the way children's drawings revealed the inside of their mind its joys and its sorrows, its past experiences and its wishful thinking, and much more. Educational psychologists have now realized the potential of art as a tool for diagnostic purposes and also as a therapeutic activity. Art therapy is now becoming an important educational tool. In the hands of the schoolteacher, it can serve as an effective way to plan the child's educational activities.

I was also inspired by descriptions of the Indian educational traditions and philosophy given by scholars, as well as those found in our folklore. In India we did not compartmentalize art and life separately. The main objective of education was the pursuit of knowledge. Pursuit of knowledge did not imply only gathering of, or seeking information. It included wisdom, capacity of discretion, control of the ego, humility, truthfulness, self-dignity, social service, and creative skills. The teacher did not impart only the education of classical subjects but also taught students the practical skills required for living a good life. The teacher and the students lived together and did everything required for survival from collecting firewood for cooking to receiving guests and looking after them in the most hospitable manner.

Education was related to the professional, family and social needs of the students. If it was a kshatriya (warrior class), along with other subject, the art of using weaponry and like political science was also taught. According to the Indian classical tradition, a person was considered well educated only if he was conversant in all the sixty-four arts (seventy-two according to some scriptures) which included almost everything that makes life wholesome and practically and aesthetically sound. These educational concepts most probably applied to those sections of the population which were engaged in professions related to intellectual, religious, as well as trade and defence activities. Artisans too had their educational traditions, in which along with learning the skills of their trade, social, religious as well as ethical values and their practice were given great importance.

The colonial period of Indian history has been a dark period in terms of the educational, artistic, industrial and cultural traditions of our country. It caused a dislocation in almost every aspect of Indian life especially its value system. The system of education the British constructed was totally divorced from the daily lives of the people. It could not have been otherwise. For, the sole purpose of that education was to manufacture clerks for the colonial administration. Instead of education being geared to the human needs of the community, it was built around the needs of the colonial administration, through textbooks.

Although the British now are nowhere in the picture, our educational system has remained book-oriented. In addition to clerks and administrators our national education system today aims at producing more and more engineers, doctors, professors, etc. Our so-called national educational planning has not been able to rescue the country from colonial practices. Instead of bringing joy and the spirit of togetherness in the individual and the community, it has nurtured competition and greed.

Contrary to our situation, the West has taken some interesting steps towards improving their educational systems. Although it was mainly on account of their commercial values —certainly not solely socialistic ideals—that new elements were introduced in the school curriculum. Eventually the changes proved to have led their thinking in new directions. With the advent of the industrial revolution, industry needed an increasing number of draftsmen and crafts people, for which the training of the eye and the hand was essential. In Britain, a little before the middle of the eighteenth century, the government set up a Select Committee to enquire into the best method to promote the understanding of art among the people. The Report of the Committee recommended that it would be useful for the artist and the consumer of the works of art, if art was made a part of the elementary school curriculum. It led to the introduction of drawing and painting in school curricula sometime in the mid eighteenth century.

The introduction of art and drawing was by no means aimed at teaching art and art appreciation as it had nothing to do with the training in the real objective of art. It was too mechanical and dry in spirit.

R.R.Tomlinson called it "soul destroying and sterile methods".<sup>12</sup> Yet I have no hesitation in saying that this step paved the way, though unintentionally, towards the revival of art education in the right direction. After all, the *Bauhaus* movement was a product of industrialization. The growth of radical art movements, e.g. Impressionism, was also a kind of reaction .to the European values of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries!

That kind of art education included drawing of straight lines going in different directions, drawing of different shapes, geometrical or otherwise. In short, it aimed at understanding perspective, three dimensional drawing. Later on, some free hand drawing was also introduced in the curriculum, and with it the effects of light and shade. Naturally this kind of drawing did not much interest children. It was too dry an exercise, for them to do still-lives of cups, vases and pyramids. Gradually drawing and painting of scenes, trees and flowers with colours, and designing and pattern making also became part of art education.

In Europe, all this was considered progressive about three quarters of a century ago. In India, however, art classes in most schools, even today, continue to do only that which the majority of the children hate, a fact teachers know very well. Moreover, art is not thought to be an important subject in the context of the totality of the educational scheme. And since it is not a "difficult" subject, children take it for passing the exams. The main reason for the drawing class being so boring for children is the manner in which it is *taught*. Teachers handling the subject may have had some training in drawing, but not many of them have received the required education in art teaching, leave alone in the understanding of the art children create. Moreover, very few teachers possess a sound understanding of the child's mind and its needs. Unfortunately, most of our teacher training institutes remain untouched by the discoveries made by psychologists into the depth of the world of children. Our educationists and planners cannot even imagine the profound role art can play in the development of the child's personality.

While our educators have continued to impose their ideas on children, in other countries significant changes have taken place in the educational world over the past several decades. New experiments have been conducted to explore the world and needs of childhood. The German founder of *kindergarten* educational reformer, Wilhelm August Froebel showed that freedom is a very important element in the education of the child. Some others demonstrated that strict discipline was harmful for the creativity of children.

The work of these psychologists was important historically, but the work done by an Austrian artist named Franz Cizek was revolutionary in the field of children's creativity in practical terms. Despite emphasizing the importance and need for freedom for the development of the child's personality most psychologists often impose their own ideas on children. Cizek, on the other hand, has protected the child from adult domination. He said: "I have liberated the child. Previous to me children were punished and scolded for scribbling and drawing. I have saved them from this treatment. I said to them: What you do is good. And I gave mankind something which until I came had been spurned. I have shown parents the creative power of children. Formerly parents and teachers suppressed the best things in children. *But I have done all that not from the point of view of the pedagogue, but as a human being as artist. Such things are not achieved from pedagogy, but from the artistic and human or from human artisticness.*" (Emphasis is mine)<sup>13</sup>

Despite many hindrances and criticisms, Cizek maintained his respect and love for the child. So much so, he said something that had never been heard before: "The most beautiful things in the creation of the child are his 'mistakes'. The more a child's work is full of these individual mistakes the more wonderful it is. And the more a teacher removes them from the child's work the duller, more desolate and impersonal it

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12. R.R. Tomlinson: Children as Artists, King Penguin Books, London, 1947, p.10

13. Franz Cizek: Quoted by Wilhelm Viola in *Child Art*, University of London Press, 1945, p.34

becomes."<sup>14</sup> This I feel is really revolutionary and a genuine recognition of freedom, the freedom that allows the individual to grow on the basis of his psychological character and need.

Franz Cizek was an artist himself. He was born in 1865 in a small Czech town called Leitmeritz in Bohemia, then a part of Austria. Wilhelm Viola described Cizek's life and struggles in these words: "Cizek came to Vienna when he was twenty, and entered the Academy of Fine Arts. He lodged with a poor family, where, fortunately, there were children. These children saw him painting and drawing, and they wanted, as Cizek so often related, 'to play painting too'. Out of his genuine love for children, one of the reasons of his success, he gave them what they asked for— pencils, brushes, and paints. And beautiful works were created by them. It was a happy coincidence that Cizek was in close contact with the founders of the *Secession* movement, a kind of revolution of young painters and architects against the old academic art. He showed his friends the drawings of his children and these artists were so thrilled that they encouraged Cizek to open what they scarcely liked to call a school, but for which they had no other name. There children would be allowed, for the first time, to do what they liked. Now a long fight with the school authorities began. They saw no necessity for an institution such as Cizek wanted to establish. They turned the project down... He made a new application... *To let the children grow, develop, and mature...* This programme they found entirely inadequate.

"It was in 1897 that Cizek got the permit to open his very first Juvenile Art Class..., but the experiment proved so successful that, in 1903...the State offered him rooms in the State *Kunstgewerbeschule*. This was, fortunately, the only material support he ever had from the State, and it proved a blessing, for it saved him from any interference in his work...

"This Juvenile Art Class Cizek carried on until 1938. Forty years were spent in humble and loving observation of thousands of children, whose ages ranged from four to fourteen years, including some children of two years of age. In these experiments and careful study of the children's works, which Cizek called documents, he discovered the eternal laws which are followed unconsciously by the young creators."<sup>15</sup>

There is no doubt that products of child art are not identical to those of adult artists. Art that children create does not have elements such as adult objectivity, social content and abstraction that often inspire adult creativity. Nevertheless, it has to be accepted that the unconscious creativity of the child often has a tremendous degree of beauty and frankness, as Acharya Nandalal Bose writes: "Young children's drawings and paintings are very beautiful; they have amazing colours and rhythm. Only that artist will reach that state of creativity who has attained the heights of the deepest knowledge."<sup>16</sup>

Thanks to my teachers like Acharya Nandalal Bose I had some insight into the qualities of child-art before I started working in Sevagram. After being engaged in my experimental work for five years, I came across some writing on the work of Franz Cizek. It gave me further self-confidence, and the conviction that I was on the right track. I was now constantly on the lookout for reports and descriptions of work being done in the USA and Europe on the subject of children's creativity.

I found that many educators did not approve of the freedom Cizek gave to the child in expressing his or her internal world. They continued to say that children do need guidance, because giving them total freedom would limit their growth to a certain level only. Based on my own observation and experience I have no doubt that in the name of guidance most teachers give instructions, and impose their own ideas, though some do it in a subtle manner.

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14. ibid., p.33

15. ibid ., p. 11-12

16. Nandalal Bose: *Chitra Katha* (see above), p.74

The substantial awareness that I gained by conducting various experiments clarified my thinking about the real educational needs of the children of our country in the context of their environment, culture, and economic conditions. The Sevagram school represented real India to me. It was in a rural part of the country which was poor and untouched by the elite culture created during the British Raj. All the children except very few came from the nearby villages. Those 'very few' were of urban or semi-urban families who were living in Sevagram and working in some of the departments there. Not a single child had any previous experience of drawing pictures nor of making models with clay.

I soon realized that none of the systems or schools operating in the Western world could serve as models for our work. The first thing to note was that ours was not an effort to build a unique educational institution. We were working on a scheme that would be suitable for every school in the 6,00,000 villages of India. In other words, we were aiming at a system which would be sound and suitable for every child, for that matter every man and woman, in the country, and not for a selected few, as is the case everywhere in the world.

It is mostly the top layer of society that gets the best, whereas the majority has to survive on the minimum. Gandhiji was very clear and firm on this objective. I knew that in Britain a dream that parents cherish is that their children go to some public school.<sup>17</sup> It is not on merit that all the children are selected for entrance in these schools; connections play an important role. But the point I wish to make here is that according to Gandhiji's educational scheme every child should have the best opportunity to blossom into a fulfilled individual and a creative member of the community. And he knew that education, as it was being practised, created spirit of competition rather than cooperation, encouraged the attitude of separation instead of unity, and instead of teaching to give, it inculcated greed in the educated. In other words it nurtured violence in the minds of the pupils in place of non-violence.

Education has to take a sophisticated view of the question of violence. It must define violence in all its manifestations. Physical violence is only a tiny part of violence committed within human societies. For instance, the inhuman treatment of the blacks in North America or the Harijans (untouchables) in India is equally, if not more damaging than any physical violence. The degree of violence children, or for that matter women, are subjected to is incalculable. Who could take the necessary steps to eliminate such violence from human behaviour? Surely not the politicians) who, by and large, are the products of the so-called modern education. Hardly any among them have the imagination and will-power to take necessary steps in their own lives or the lives of those they claim to lead. Many of them are responsible for sowing the seeds of violence in society. Therefore, the responsibility, I believe, is of those who want to be called teachers, and who are expected always to keep their minds on the future of the community they serve.

I want to mention here an observation that I feel is relevant while talking about the educational work of Gandhiji. I believe that Gandhiji did not have enough time to devote exclusively to education. Probably, he hoped to do that after seeing the British quit. Whether it was lack of time or the time scale he set for introducing new elements in a gradual manner, as he said that one step at a time was enough for him, it is difficult to say. Perhaps it was on account of his own perspective; he did not or could not define the role of art in the development of the personality of the individual as well as the community! What would have happened to the role of art in Nayee Talim if he was there to work out the details? I do not know, as he had his own ideas about it.

It was the Committee set up by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh that drew up the syllabus. It included drawing and painting as one of the subjects. Acharya Nandalal Bose had formulated the syllabus of that section of the curriculum, which I found to be a good starting point. However, I also knew that most of my colleagues were not acquainted with the new perspective needed for teaching art in a progressive system of education like Nayee Talim. I had imbibed this perspective from Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and from whatever limited knowledge I had gained of the classical Indian approach to creative activities.

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17. The Doon Public School in Dehra Dun opened in 1935 was the first school on the lines of British Public Schools.

They, in all likelihood, expected me to be a good drawing teacher. This thought made me wonder what would have been the result of my work if I had been just that. Would I have made the discoveries I was able to make about child art and education.

There cannot be any doubt regarding the comprehensiveness of the Nayee Talim syllabus and the balanced stress it put on human values. Apart from the knowledge required to understand and live with one's environs and the skills necessary for day-to-day life, the syllabus also put emphasis on cultural activities and social service. I was a novice in the field and had no previous experience of teaching, yet, intuitively, I was deeply impressed and amazed by the clarity and boldness of approach. In spite of a little intellectual loneliness that I sometimes felt, I had self-confidence, and was able to gradually demonstrate that art is the way to joy, freedom and fulfilment for children.

Towards the end of the six months teachers training camp, I started contemplating how and where I could continue this work, without having the slightest idea about its potential; but I was interested.

One afternoon I had a pleasant surprise. The Head of our institute, the Aryanayakam invited me for "a chat". Ashadevi Aryanayakam said that they would very much like me to continue the work that I had started with children and trainee teachers. I told them that I had been thinking of talking to them about this matter for a few days! So, I continued with the experiments in Sevagram for eighteen years.

Before starting after the summer vacations, I spent a month at Santiniketan, sharing my experiences and getting further guidance from my teachers, specially Acharya Nandalal Bose and Acharya Binod Behari Mukherji. In one of the sessions with the Acharya he made a drawing of a horse cart to explain what he thought could be a guide for my thinking. He described the picture: "One of the two wheels of the cart is made by Gurudev (Tagore) and the other by Mahatmaji (Gandhi). You are in the driver's seat. The horses are your energy, and the reins are your mind, will power and discretion. It is lucky that now you are with Mahatmaji. Try to do your best." I went back to Sevagram and restarted the work with added self-confidence and peace of mind.

This book is the result of fifteen years of experimentation. The incentive for working on a book as such came from several directions. As the main centre of Nayee Talim, Sevagram had a special responsibility for training teachers from various states and educational institutions, for which I had to systematize my thinking and experimentation. Art being one of the subjects, I tried to see that the trainees got as good an idea as possible about my approach to art and its teaching methodology. This meant that I developed a theoretical as well as practical programme of lectures and demonstrations for them. Moreover, I was invited to give short courses on Art Teaching in Nayee Talim teachers training institutes in different part of the country. But the biggest push came from the official journal of the movement, *Nayee Talim*, when its editor asked me to write a regular series of articles on my experiences with children. In other words, I had to *write*.

The first article appeared in the September 1947 issue of the journal. By that time I had realized that due to our circumstances, economic as well as socio-political, our approach and techniques would have to be different from what had been going on for decades. I was fully aware of the fact that some good work had been and was still being done, in the field of teaching art to children. Yet, I knew that what we had to—do—keeping in mind every child of the country had to be radically different.

If the work I was doing was for *every child*, the book too would have to be for *every teacher*, possibly for every parent too. So I begin with a chapter discussing the question: Why art education? It deals with the approach of the adults. The second chapter, I thought, must try to discover the answer to the same question from the children's point of view. Most teachers of primary schools do not even know the reasons behind the argument for teaching art to children, except that teaching of drawing can be helpful in some practical ways. To help the teacher understand why this minor subject is being given an important place in our

educational programme, it is necessary to discuss the matter from the point of view of both, the child and the teacher.

In the next three chapters, I deal with the art of children and its manifestation in early adolescence. A teacher who knows about the nature of child art and its various stages will be able to successfully plan his or her method and programme of teaching. The stage of adolescence has a significance of its own. It is also a special period in the growth of the personality of the child. The approach to teaching art to adolescents has to be somewhat different. Moreover, it is important for teachers also to develop their sense of aesthetics, particularly in view of the sensitivity and beauty of child art.

I have tried to share my experience and findings with teachers about teaching, educational atmosphere and methodology in the sixth and seventh chapters. I have not discussed any particular methodology, for, I believe, rather I am convinced, that each teacher should be alive to the need for developing his or her own methodology depending upon the requirements of each child, the local atmosphere and available resources and equipment. Of course, I have tried to make some practical suggestions as well.

Art appreciation is an important aspect of cultural growth and the development of aesthetic sense. The time to introduce it in the syllabus is at the beginning of adolescence. But it is also an essential ingredient in the education of the teacher. Hence, I felt the need to include a discussion on art appreciation. My effort has been to not make the subject of art appreciation a mechanical subject but to leave it as a matter of common sense.

Very often teachers—and sometimes parents too—asked questions about various aspects of child art. Generally, I discussed them on the spot, but sometimes I noted them down in my diary to be discussed later at a more appropriate time. I thought it to be a crisp technique to handle queries or doubts. It is commonly used. Although, answers of most of the questions are to be found in the text of various chapters, I felt it might be useful to present a selection of questions with their answers in a separate chapter. Some questions obviously need somewhat elaborate answers, more than what can be found in the main text of the book. I have included, as appendices, three articles published in *Nayee Talim* as answers to a couple of questions I was often asked, which I felt solicited special treatment.

At this moment, I feel like that child who runs to his teacher to show him his work with a feeling of accomplishment. In this case the readers are my teachers. It gives me the same sense of accomplishment in presenting the results of fifteen years of my work in the form of a book. I do it with a deep sense of humility and hope that it might become a source of inspiration to teachers who have genuine love for children and respect for their personality, and to parents who wish to see the expression of joy and fulfilment on the faces of their children. The ambition behind working on this book can be best expressed in Tagore's words: "Let the growth of the child's mind be under Nature's generous and joyful space and time. Today education is sitting on the child's shoulders as a burden." It must get off from there and become a source of joy for the child. I shall be grateful if this effort of mine proves useful to even a handful of teachers.

## Why Art Education?



*What is needed is loving attachment, patience and also hard work with meditation. Art is a life-long meditation and not a hobby<sup>1</sup>*

Planning for education requires, among other things, two serious considerations. Firstly, it has to aim at preparing the individual to become an integral part of the value system the society has built over a long period for the behavioural pattern of its members. These values and the manner in which they are interpreted and practised represent the ideals and the cultural characteristics of that society. Therefore, a major task of education is to prepare the members of the society to try and fulfil those ideals.

The other consideration is the inherent nature of a particular group of people and, of course, its individual members. This *inherent human* nature could be made up of natural, native, ancestral and genetic elements, conditioning, and such considerations. It is, so to say, *bred in the bones*. If educational planning does not take this factor into consideration, it would not only fail in its responsibility, it could also do damage and distort the personality of the individual, eventually doing great harm to the society as a whole. One point that cannot be overemphasized is that education, under no circumstance can be a process of moulding personalities, not even to force or coax one to fall in line with the established norms of society.

Moreover, even if one wants to mould something, one has to know the nature of the material to be moulded. If bronze is chosen for making a sculpture it should be treated as bronze and not as wood or clay. The sculptor must know the nature of bronze, its qualities and limitations but education deals with human nature, which has its own potential and pace of growth. Its objective is not to mould but to help the individual grow and develop into a socially good and creative human being, free to make his or her own choices in life. Hence education has to be subtle in its planning and objectives and the manner of achieving these objectives.

In other words, educational planning will be sound only if it can strike a healthy balance between socio-cultural ideals and human nature with its vast potential for building a liberated personality of the individual. There is no place for physical force in sound and healthy education. Along with an understanding of the values one's society cherishes and learning to practice them in life, education ought to inculcate a deep sense of discretion and a feeling of self-respect and freedom in the individual to be able to think independently and make choices for himself or herself.

In this chapter, we shall try to explore the realm of social and cultural ideals related to art. In educational circles today it has become a fashion to say that art is necessary for the development of the child's personality. For the same reason some extra subjects are added into the curricula. However, very few teachers become aware of the rationale behind such conclusions, reached by educational experts, about the special role each of these subjects plays in the development of the individual's personality, and its social relevance. Many of those who talk about it do so rather superficially.

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1. Nandalal Bose: *Shilpa Katha* (Hindi translation, Published by Sahitya Bhawan Ltd., Allahabad, 1952)  
p.58

Educational planning, in all the cultures of the world, has been done by teachers who were clear about its goals in relation to the individual as well as the community. They had a well defined image about the potential of each subject they thought should be taught at different levels and to different groups of people. For instance, teaching of mathematics was not mainly to transfer to the pupils the skills necessary for practical matters of life such as buying and selling; it was also meant to develop a special kind of mental discipline, which cannot be acquired by any other exercise. Therefore, it was considered an important part of education. The same principle was applicable to other subjects and activities which the educational processes looked after. This is surely true in the context of higher education in contemporary societies.

By implication and also by necessity it meant that the teacher must have full comprehension of the practical aspects of each subject he or she taught and its character-building potential, manifest as well as latent. The objective of art education, therefore, should not be an activity only to train the hand to be able to make attractive objects and to decorate the household or the work place. It should aim at the holistic growth of the individual. In other words, education in general and art education in particular is a way for one to grow and become sensitive to the beauty in nature, of social values and the aesthetic aspects of life as a whole. In art education, training of the hand and the eye is only a tool, the object is to build a creative, fulfilled and well balanced personality.

#### ***Aesthetics and Surroundings***

People say "art makes life beautiful" and they want the artist to make beautiful objects for them. Such a feeling is strengthened by the discoveries about ancient cultures. For instance, while making a judgment on the qualitative standards of an old civilization, the first and often the major argument art historians and archaeologists put forward is based on the quality of objects unearthed from the site of a particular civilization. "The Indus civilization was great and very mature". This belief is based on the quality of the images found during the excavations at Mohenjodaro and Harappa as well as the town-planning of these cities. There is hardly any other proof available, written or otherwise, supporting the argument.

Today, factories producing on a mass scale, employ artists and designers to ensure that the goods they produce are popularly accepted as beautiful. Artists are employed to guide the production of commodities of daily use, be it in handicraft workshops or in factories; they are expected to provide the artisans/workers designs—shapes and colours etc. In short, the spirit behind it all is the creation of beauty in every physical aspect of our lives. With such an important place allotted to beauty in daily life, it becomes apparent that some kind of art education should be introduced as a part of general education.

However, the question is: Are the objects and the way they are used in homes, offices or in the marketplace really beautiful? The sad thing about this question, especially in the context of India, is that life in the country, which traditionally had a very high aesthetic level, is today getting overloaded with objects of poor taste. For example, take textiles. If a world history of textiles is to be written, traditions of sarees such as *Paithan*, *Pattan*, *Sambalpuri*, *Chanderi*, *Baluchari* and hundreds more will feature on top of the list. In the same country today women take pride in wearing voile and georgette sarees. A country which produced (and still produces) the most beautiful bronze vessels, today takes pride in manufacturing and using a large quantity of aluminium pots in the kitchen. The bronze artisan is being forced out of his vocation. Few countries had such a rich tradition of beautiful and educationally sound toys for children. But today the Sunday market is saturated with tin and plastic toys. If a traditional toy maker, by mistake, goes to the market with a basketful of his beautiful toys, he has to return home with all the toys on his back.

Generally speaking, the taste of our people has deteriorated to such an extent that the sense of proportion has been grossly distorted. Yes, there are rich people who spend large sums on making private collections of objects of traditional arts and artefacts, and they are highly respected by the society for the patronage they give to art. They are known as art connoisseurs but it is difficult to be certain that the objects of daily use in their homes, even if those objects are very expensive, are of the same aesthetic level—barring

exceptions. Building an art collection and the presence of intrinsic beauty and grace in one's life today are two entirely different things.

"Considering art as a monopoly of the rich and the indulgent, many people discard it and want to keep it in exile away from their day-to-day life. They forget that the essence of real life and art is its beauty. Art cannot be judged by its price in money. The poor Santhal<sup>2</sup> keeps his hut nicely painted with mud and cow dung and keeps his old and torn clothes neatly, but college students living in palatial hostels leave their clothes and other things untidy and spread all over, making their rooms ugly. Whereas the sense of beauty of that poor Santhal is alive and integrated with his life, the sense of beauty of the rich offspring is superficial and lifeless. I have also seen a framed calendar picture of a *memsahmeb* hanging next to a really good painting in the house of an *educated person*, an arrangement supposed to be aesthetically good. I have seen, in students' hostels, shirts hanging on picture frames, dirty cups of tea, mirror and comb lying on the study table, and paper flowers arranged in coco-cola cans, and men wearing the Indian dhoti with a Western jacket with open collar, and women wearing high heeled shoes<sup>3</sup> with sarees. All these are examples of the lack of the sense of beauty and gracefulness in their lives. Whether we are rich or we are poor, such a situation very clearly illustrates our aesthetic poverty."<sup>4</sup>

#### **Poverty of Taste**

What are the reasons behind such a poverty of taste? There can hardly be any doubt that this aesthetic poverty is the result of the dislocation of the integration between art and life, to a great extent by the growth of industrialization which had the built-in mechanism to cause this dislocation. This does not imply that the fault is that of industrialization, but historically speaking, industrialization, in the manner it has come about, has played a crucial role in the processes of separating art from our day-to-day life. It has caused almost a total change in the tools and methods of making objects of daily use through which our sense of beauty and balance had received expression in the past.

Methods of mass production took away the human element from the processes of making things of daily use. Artisans who made such items on a small scale were replaced by machines, the aim being to produce hundreds, nay thousands of items of identical shape and colour. Whereas the nature of the craftsman's work was to let each object have its own personality, industrialization nurtured the spirit of regimentation in the matter of aesthetic taste. The same article made, in large numbers by an artist craftsman, at the first glance may look identical, but a careful observation will show that they are riot identical. Each of the items will have something of its own about it.

Despite the Industrial Revolution, for a period, aesthetic standards, by and large, continued to be the same. Whereas the *making* of things on a mass scale involved machines, with as little involvement of the human hand as possible, in their design and appearance the aesthetic traditions of handicrafts continued to be considered ideal. Machines manufactured things solely from the point of view of their function, but for the presentation of the objects the standards of beauty, associated with handicrafts, were considered essential. This dichotomy reinforced the divorce between function and beauty, which had taken place even before the advent of the industrial revolution.

The kind of art produced from the point of view of beauty alone came into the category of fine arts and that which produced articles for use with functionality as the main objective was called applied art. Thus painting, sculpture, poetry, architecture and music were and are still considered fine arts. Art teaching institutions are called schools or colleges of fine arts. They may also teach some crafts, but these do not enjoy the same prestige and status as painting and sculpture do.

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2. A tribal group living in Bengal and Bihar

3. In the original version (in Bengali) Nandalal Bose called them shoes with hoofs

4. *ibid.*, p.28

There was never such a compartmentalization of arts in the Indian tradition; almost everything one did or made was considered art. Vatsyayana gave a list of sixty-four arts, Jain literature listed seventy-two arts and in the Buddhist tradition the list extends to eighty-four. In fact one can go on listing all the activities which involve creativity. The most interesting thing to notice is that music, dance, painting, carpentry, blacksmithy, hairdressing, cosmetics, cooking, etc. are all listed together without any hierarchy. A barber's art is as important as that of a sculptor or a dancer and valued at the same level. In other words, every act done with a sense of beauty, grace and human relevance is art and every object created with care is an artefact.

Although the division between fine arts and applied arts was fully established as a result of the Industrial Revolution, the seeds of this division had already been sown with the advent of the Renaissance. However, it is interesting to note that even in Europe in the medieval period, every art had its practical use, whether religious, spiritual or practical. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy wrote: "Art, from the medieval point of view, was a kind of knowledge in accordance with which the artist imagined the form or design of the work to be done, and by which he reproduced this form in the required or available material. The product was not called 'art', but an 'artefact', a thing 'made by art'; the art remains in the artist. Nor was there any distinction of 'fine' from applied or 'pure' from 'decorative' art. All art was for 'good use' and 'adapted to condition'. Art could be applied either to noble or to common uses, but was no more or less art in the one case than in the other..."<sup>5</sup>

Despite the Indian philosophy of art, which listed sixty four arts on a totally non-hierarchical basis, the colonial period radically transformed the general approach of the so-called educated people in India. They imitated the Western standards and values in judging all art. The division of art between fine and applied also channeled the best talents in the direction of fine arts, especially painting and sculpture, which were mostly patronized by the rich. In addition to the effects of industrialization, the hierarchical division of the arts also caused a gradual decline in the aesthetic aspect of handicrafts. It resulted in the transformation of applied art into art *applied*. To put it differently, in the absence of real artistic talent, most of which went into the creation of fine arts, the artisan, in order to make his artefacts look more beautiful, hence more widely acceptable, added a maximum degree of ornamentation on to them. It is something like pasting art on items for increasing their market value. The important thing to notice in this context is that the more ornamental an item, the more it is appreciated. Actually, craftsmanship, particularly the kind with much ornamentation but little artistic element, is considered beautiful without being beautiful in the real sense.

Coomaraswamy continues: "Our use of the word 'decorative' would have been abusive, as if we spoke of a millinery or upholstery: for all the words purporting decoration in many languages, Mediaeval Latin included, referred originally not to anything that could be added to an already finished and effective product merely to please the eye or ear, but to the completion of anything with whatever be necessary to its functioning, whether with respect to the mind or the Body : a sword, for example, would 'ornament' a knight, as virtue 'ornaments' the soul or knowledge the mind... Perfection, rather than beauty, was the end in view... Nothing unintelligible could have been thought of as beautiful."<sup>6</sup>

In Britain some people were not happy with the Victorian standards of aesthetics and the growing commercialism due to the Industrial Revolution. Among those who built an opposition movement in that direction during the later half of the nineteenth century, were John Ruskin and later William Morris. They tried to revive the Gothic spirit and values specially in arts and religion. With a short-sighted view of history it will be easy to say, perhaps legitimately, that the Ruskin/Morris revivalist movement failed in its endeavour to change the course of events. There is, however, no doubt that its impact has been very

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5. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: 'Nature of Mediaeval Art' in *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, Dover publications, 1956, p.111

6. ibid., p. 111-112

significant from the point of view of the growth of the modern movement in arts during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. It must be admitted, though, that due to the inherent clout of industrialization and the rejection of morality involved in trade and commerce due to the influence of economists like J.M. Keynes, the failure of the revivalists was predestined.

Why do I drag Keynes into a discussion on art and education? It is because art and education on the one hand, and morality and other human values on the other, are closely related to each other. Keynes and others who led the West in its pursuit of economic happiness rejected morality, thus gearing education to greed and deceit. During the thirties, economic depression Keynes speculated on the "economic possibilities for our grand children" and concluded that the day might not be all that far off when everybody would be rich. We shall then, he said, "once more value ends above means and prefer the good to the useful." But, he warned, "The time for all this is not yet. For at least another 100 years we must pretend to ourselves and to every one that fair is foul and foul is fair; for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little longer still. For only they can lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into daylight."<sup>7</sup> If that was the philosophy of the managers of society, how could the morality oriented movement stand against it!

At such a time the formation of the Bauhaus movement by Walter Gropius in 1919 in Weimar, Germany was an important happening. It was largely responsible for revolutionizing the teaching of painting, sculpture, the industrial arts and architecture throughout the Western world. It attracted students from Austria and Germany, who became lifelong followers. The Bauhaus sought to end the nineteenth century schism between the artist and the technically expert craftsman by training students equally in both fields. In the first year, each workshop was taught by both a craftsman and an artist. Later, as the school trained its own teachers, each workshop was led by one artist-craftsman. Gropius assembled a faculty noted and admired for their brilliance, energy and productivity. An esteemed panel of artists, e.g. architects, painters and typographers were closely associated with the Bauhaus.

The Nazi rule did not like the work and the people associated with the Bauhaus movement. In 1933, the National Socialist Government of Hitler's Germany closed down the Bauhaus. In 1937, one of its leaders opened a new Bauhaus in Chicago, which was later called by the name of Institute of Design.

After the Impressionist movement, the Bauhaus made the most profound and lasting impact on the Western art scene. An important outcome of the experiment was that the hierarchic competition between the functional and the beautiful started disappearing. Designers realized that the introduction of the machine made it imperative that the character of designs and designing must be in harmony with the built-in potential and limitations of the tools used in the making of things. The Bauhaus other achievement was in clarifying the separate roles of handicrafts and machine production, and at the same time to redefine beauty as something pure and simple, not garbed with ornaments. It was a reaction to some of the norms that had developed during the Baroque period and later totally vulgarized by Victorian aesthetes.

The situation in India was somewhat different. It took some time for the Industrial Revolution to make its impact on the indigenous industry—handicrafts. Although the industrial age started here rather late, the existing cottage industries had already been under strong pressure put by the colonial trade and industrial policies. During the East India Company period, Indian handicrafts had received some backing from the British market. With the growth of their own industry on account of the Industrial Revolution, the British stopped importing finished goods from India, especially textiles. They started exporting finished cloth to India. To find a big market for their own textiles they resorted to policies that succeeded in gradually destroying the Indian traditions of textile making.

Victorian values and standards crept into Indian life, with the view of ultimately changing the country's psyche. However, two factors of the Indian situation saved the country from total disaster in the field of

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7. E.F.Schumacher: *Small Is Beautiful*, Perennial Library, Harper & Row, London, 1975, p.24

cultural, aesthetic and economic values. Indian society is basically rural, hence industrialization took some time to reach the country in a big way. Moreover, the British rulers were, luckily, short-sighted; they did not want to transfer their new technologies to a subject people. So, it was but natural for the machine age to take some time before reaching the masses.

The other, and the more significant point to make here is that the old traditions were so deeply rooted in the life of the country that it would have been next to impossible to throw them away overnight. In Indian civilization, one of the oldest in history, there were surely elements which even a highly modernistic educated mind would take pride in maintaining. For instance, take the Indian handicrafts, e.g. textile, metal work, terracotta sculpture for votive purposes, and jewellery. You can pick up hundreds of art objects still being produced and used as essential items of daily life, which few modern artists would dare compete with or discard because they are "old".

Unfortunately, the so-called modern education based on the educational foundations laid during the colonial period is expediting the rapid extinction of these traditions. The faster the growth of this system of education, the quicker will be the disappearance of traditional skills and aesthetic standards, and the objects that are used by the people in their daily lives will become uglier. In the course of time the beautiful objects which we still have around, will be seen only in museums. But there too they will gradually whither away, for they are not, or never were, made to last long. The lives of millions of craftspeople depended on the production of such objects.

What has been said above should not be interpreted as plea only for the continuation of all the traditional arts to the exclusion of any other development in artistic creation. Nor it is implied here that everything traditional is of the highest aesthetic order.

The purpose here is to explore the dynamics that played their role in forming traditions that made the objects of daily use, generally speaking, beautiful, and to discuss the role of education in making our surroundings aesthetically healthy; also to equip ourselves -with the capacity and discretion to select beautiful things.

As time changes so do art forms, which does not mean that old forms and expressions become redundant. Nowadays people say that they feel tired looking at or using the same thing all the time. They want to have something new, implying that even if an object is beautiful it should be abandoned because it is old. Artists (designers) start catering for new fashions. The rich set fashionable trends in a society, for they can buy even these designers. It is the lack of genuine aesthetic sense that gives precedence to novelty. Most of the people who talk of art appreciation including the art schools, ignore the truth that creativity comes through a serious study of the relationship between nature and art traditions, and not in the process of looking for novelty. All great art has been the result of this kind of study, whether done intuitively or intellectually.

The artist learns the method from traditions and discovers the form from nature. True, only a born artist can accomplish it successfully. Nonetheless, it is also true that the path of the artisan of whatever calibre, is the same, particularly as we do not make a distinction between fine arts and applied arts. In this respect the role of education is uniquely important. It is the responsibility of education to acquaint every individual member of the society with the artists' path of discovering forms, not only on a theoretical level but also in practical terms. The aim of having beautiful objects of daily use which make the household atmosphere pleasant, can be achieved by appropriate educational planning.

### ***Knowing Nature***

True art education not only makes the physical surroundings beautiful, its more important objective is to reach the deeper layers of the human heart. The artist studies nature to understand its spirit and its rhythm and to feel a oneness with it, so much so that gradually everything develops into a relationship of friendship. Once, when I was sketching a tree in my nature study class, Acharya Nandalal Bose said that

the artist must like a thing that he or she wants to draw. "If this tree, which you are studying and making sketches of (of which you are doing *aaraadhana*<sup>8</sup>), if you really like it, it will become a treasure for all your life. If any time you experience extreme pain, feel lonely, feel that the world is all empty, this tree, on the side of the road, will welcome you saying: 'Here I am'. You will find solace under it. It will remain an endless treasure for you."<sup>9</sup>

On another occasion the Acharya said: "...The essentiality of it all is that you have to like the thing you are drawing the picture of. It should win you over. If that happens it will descend on to the tip of your brush without your making much effort. Only then it will be real art. This is the greatest skill behind artistic creation"<sup>10</sup> What my teacher was trying to tell me was: one of the essential purposes of artistic creativity is to establish sympathetic links between human beings and nature. And he was probably pointing out to me, rather sadly, that in the contemporary society the human heart is becoming more and more insensitive to nature's gestures of friendship.

According to Indian as well as Chinese aesthetics, it is of supreme importance that the maker should identify with the object that he or she makes. As an art student I was told a story of a Chinese Master and a disciple of his. A young man, eager to learn the art of painting from a great Master, went to him to find out if the Master would accept him as his disciple. He sat on one side of the Master, who was preoccupied working on a painting. After a while the Master turned towards him and without looking at his face asked: "What do you want?" "Master, I want to learn painting. Would you be kind enough to accept me as a disciple?" Without giving much thought to the matter, the Master looking at a cat sitting not too far away, told the young man: "Alright! Go and study the cat."

Next day the young aspirant went to the Master and put the sketches near him, saying that he had done the study. The Master shoved the sketches aside and said, "Go and do more." This exercise went on for a long time. The time gaps between the young man's visits to the Master became longer and longer, so much so that at one stage he stopped going there. After many years, perhaps after he reached middle age, he went to see the Master and sat near him until the Master turned to him and asked whether he wanted anything. The Master had forgotten the young man. But when he was reminded of the earlier visits, he asked the disciple if he had finished the study of the cat!

The disciple replied: "Master, I do not know whether I have finished the study or not, but I have myself become a cat." The Master was pleased to hear the disciple say such a thing. He looked at the disciple with approval and affection: "My dear disciple, I certify that your training has now been completed."

It needs to be emphasized that to inculcate and develop such a capacity in the artist to be able to identify with the object to be painted or sculpted is the task of education the artists receives from their *gurus*. However, I also wish to point out here that there is something inherent in art that makes one who engages in an artistic pursuit imbibe the spirit of friendship with nature, a sympathetic relationship. But, of course, much of it depends on the kind of civilization we live in. The so-called modern civilization is becoming more and more materialistic in its relationships, between human beings and between humans and nature. Very soon, it seems, a stage may come when human kind may become totally devoid of the sensitivity we are talking about.

Leave aside the question of human responses to nature, today the spirit of friendship and a sympathetic attitude, even within human societies has reached an alarmingly low ebb. In large towns and cities, most next-door neighbours do not know each other well enough to be able to develop mutual trust and amity. The degree of destruction of the natural environment by human activities is an indication of the

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8. The Closest equivalent of *aaradhana* is worship

9. Nandalal Bose: *Shilpa Katha*, p.66-67

10. ibid, p.68

desensitization of individuals as well as of societies. Commercialism and greed are destroying the spirit of unity with nature, and competition is replacing cooperation among human beings.

#### ***Education to be Planned Properly***

The only tool I can think of for reversing this trend is education. If it is planned properly it will bring back the sympathetic and friendly relationship between human beings and nature which we have lost on account of topsy-turvy values generated by the modern pattern of industrialization. It will have adequate emphasis on art education. Among other things, art education inculcates the kind of sensitivity needed to understand and enjoy nature, to be one with it. It should and does make the artist so sensitive that the destruction of a tree or even a flower hurts his or her feelings. It hurts because the artist is able to see and feel the beauty of the flower, which has become a friend; and to see a friend being hurt is painful.

I remember having heard a short Santhal poem of which I cannot quote the words but I do remember the meaning. A Santhal woman says to her friend: "I went to fetch water from the river but came back very depressed. I did not know why! When I went again to fetch water, on my way back I saw a broken flower hanging on its branch. Then I realized why I was sad." The truth is that the life of the Santhals, not yet totally urbanized, is still much closer to nature. When Santhals pluck flowers it is mostly for decorating themselves, or for worship, which has been a tradition throughout in Indian culture. The purpose of plucking flowers has been either for worship or for offering to one who is loved and/or respected. Traditionally, it was either for the creation of beauty or for votive purposes. One offers only a dear object to the loved or the respected one.

Nandalal Bose wrote about the orientation inculcated by art education: "For an artist everything is a friend. He is never lonely. I like you. When you have gone away I like this tree. If there is no tree I like this door. It is difficult to say why it is so. If the liking is due to excitement or because the object is 'yours' there is very little depth in it. Liking generated by curiosity is short-lived. There is yet another kind of liking. It is: deep identification... 'Everyone' is reassuring, for they are all friends."<sup>11</sup>

#### ***Awareness***

Apart from friendship with nature there is another aspect of experiencing art, which is related to the physical aspect of nature. I shall divide it into two categories. One deals with the awareness of the existence of things around and the other relates to the eye—the visual faculty of the human eye.

Whether or not the eye sees the things that are around it is important that one is *aware* of their existence. It does not mean that one ought to know everything about everything—shape, colour, its purposes or what have you. It is important to one who is visually handicapped, as this aspect is not related to even memory images. This point can be better explained by an example from my personal experience. I had a friend during my student days who was born blind. Occasionally I used to go for a walk with him in the evenings. Often he would suddenly stop under a tree and ask, "Brother, is there something here?" Or he would ask; "Are we standing under a tree?" Or "Is there a house on our right?" This young man could not see; he did not even know what a tree or a house looked like to those with eyesight, however defective. He never had any visual experience. But he was aware of the existence of things around. It is this kind of awareness that helps us to be sensitive about things outside ourselves.

To clarify the point further, I shall give another example from my days as an art teacher in Sevagram. Art was one of the subjects in the teachers training course. The season was autumn, when *harshringar*<sup>12</sup> trees blossom profusely. We were working on a small project for nature study. I asked the teacher-students if they knew of such a flower, and the time of the year it blossoms, and whether they had seen any on the campus. A few hands went up. I asked one of them if he could describe the flower and say something about it. It was evident that he knew enough about the flower, but he thought that there were no *harshringar*

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11. ibid. p.68

12. Harshringar is a flower that blossoms late in the evening in autumn and falls down in the early morning before sunrise.

trees in this part of the country. "How can you say that with such certainty when you have not been to any place other than Sevagram", I asked him. He was, however, certain that there was not a single *harshringar* tree, let alone flowers, in the training college campus. I asked him: "Don't you, nowadays, walk over a couple of *harshringar* carpets spread on the road by which you come to the classroom from your hostel?" But he was adamant.

Next morning I went to the spot and waited for this student. When he reached the point I shouted: "Stop! Where and what are you standing on? What are these flowers called?" He felt ashamed and uttered: "Oh! How blind I am!" No doubt, he knew about *harshringar*. If I had put a flower in his hand when we were discussing it the previous day he would have recognized it. But he did not have the *awareness* of its being there.

These are two entirely opposite kinds of examples. In the first one although the person could not see the world around him on account of blindness, he was sensitive and aware of its presence; in the second example the person had perfect eyesight and sufficient knowledge, but his sense of awareness about the presence of other things around him had remained grossly under developed. I believe that awareness has an intimate relationship with the capacity of identification with nature. To gain awareness of the presence of things other than "me and what is mine", in other words to develop sympathy for the outside world is a way to liberate oneself from egocentricity. To have such a character is the sign of good education.

### ***Training the Eye***

The other faculty that develops through art education is the sensitivity of the eye. The more correctly the eye learns to see, the more effective and easy practical life becomes. The strength of the eye depends firstly on its physical health, secondly on factors connected with educational and/or psycho-educational processes. One is the subject of medical science and the other of education. There can be and are, of course, bridges between the two.

There are people who are born with defects and/or weaknesses of the eye, the damage having occurred before or at the time of birth or in later life due to illness or accident. One may be born partially or totally colour blind, implying thereby an absence of the capacity to see colours correctly and even seeing everything in black and white.

If a person is born with only one properly functioning eye and the other totally blind, he or she may not be able to sense depth, i.e. the third dimension. In such cases, the brain often comes to the rescue. In other words, it is a matter of understanding optical perspective, by which logic and day-to-day experience teaches that the distance between you and the objects in front can vary.

The integration of the eye and the brain is necessary for the faculty of seeing correctly. It is the task of education, and it cannot be achieved by developing the intellect alone. I have seen many intelligent people, including intellectuals, who can't judge whether or not a picture has been hung correctly on the wall, or who cannot distinguish between different shades of the same colour. Here an illustration or two would help. At one time I had nearly eighty varieties of roses in my garden in Sevagram. Quite a few people from the nearby town used to come to see them in winter season when the bushes were in bloom. The following question was often asked: "We were told that you have eighty varieties of rose but there are only three or four—red, yellow, pink and orange. Where are the others?" It showed the lack of training of the eye. In most cases, these visitors grasped only the obvious. For them the word "red" included shades of pink, vermillion, brick-red etc. What they needed was the training to see correctly.

To explain the difference between what one sees and what one knows, I put a book on the desk in front, and asked the trainees to make sketches of it as they *saw* it. Drawings of only a very few students showed any sign of correct "seeing". The majority drew a rectangle. In other words they drew the book as they knew it—a rectangular shaped item. They had no notion of perspective. Some of them, perhaps, knew of

the fact that an item kept near would look smaller when moved to a distance, but they had no concept of foreshortening. It was never taught to them.

Here is another interesting example of "incorrect" seeing, although an extreme one of its kind. I asked one of the students in a nature-study class to make a sketch of a millet plant, which was standing in isolation from the rest of the millet crop ready to be harvested. This person drew about ten pods on the plant whereas it had only one as all millet plants have only one each. I could have understood her visual statement if the plant had been one of the thousands with pods standing in front of her. But the plant she was asked to sketch was a solitary one, naturally with only one pod.

Although the second example given above is a bit too extreme, it reveals the deficiency in our educational system of students not being taught to "see". The one about the book, however, is very common, and when I asked another student to make a sketch of an item after seeing it only for five minutes, the results were shocking.

The above examples are related to the form and colour aspects of seeing. There is another aspect which is equally important. The play of light and shade has its own character and charm. How many people are able to make the fine distinction between the numerous effects this phenomena creates every moment in different situations! Most of us remain deprived of the joy that can be experienced through proper seeing. Art education can open the door of this treasure that lies in nature in abundance.

Rabindranath Tagore started painting when he had already reached the age of seventy. It seems he was not totally satisfied with expressing himself through literature alone. Although in many of his poems and other forms of writings he had written descriptions as vivid as a picture, there was something within that must have forced him to turn to the art of painting to express those images to which he could not give expression through writing. The fact is, art enriches the store-house of visual experience. One feels amazed looking at something that has not been seen before. Hence, there is so much joy in actually *seeing*. That is what Tagore called seeing through a painting.

Seeing is complete only when it is seeing with both the physical eye and the inner eye at the same time. Abanindranath Tagore has put it very succinctly: "What I see with the mind has the human element and what I see through my physical eye has the element of nature. Together, they help blossom creativity. Both are essential—seeing with the inner eye as well as with the physical eye."<sup>13</sup>

#### ***Grace in Life***

Most educators all over the world have stressed the need to enhance gracefulness in life and consider it a major task of education, especially of art education. The study of several early civilizations indicates that for good education of the individual, the arts received a great deal of attention in planning educational activities. Every educated person was expected to be skilful in at least one art activity.

It surely was true about India. Every cultured citizen was supposed to be "conversant in the sixty-four arts". Talking about conditions in classical India Hazari Prasad Dwivedi wrote: "The *rayees* (rich) himself knew these arts. Citizens were provided training and practice in some special arts. Entertainment alone was not the only objective, development of emotional and intellectual aspects were given full attention. Conversation on art was a necessary prerequisite for taking part in meetings at the royal court and intimate gatherings. One had to prove his competence and moral authority before attending such meetings."<sup>14</sup>

In Japan, Ikebana and Moribana (Japanese art of flower arrangement) was an essential part of the education, particularly of women. Men, even military personnel, had to learn the art of calligraphy. Learning these arts required hard work and concentration. A test in flower arrangement was an integral

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13. Abanindranath. Tagore: In the inaugural issue of the Journal *VishwaBharati Patrika* (Bengali)

14. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi: *Prachin Bharat Mai Kalatmak Vinode*, in Hindi (Artistic Humour in Classical India), p.11

part of the public examinations. According to the Chinese tradition, while describing the qualities of a king, a person of high position or an important public figure, it was the practice to start by mentioning his main artistic skills and then go on to other qualities. In many cases he was either a poet, a painter or a calligraphist.

While describing his ideal society Plato said "... We must look for artists and craftsmen capable of perceiving the real nature of what is beautiful, and then our young men living as it were in a healthy climate, will benefit because all the works of art they see and hear influence them for good, like the breezes from some healthy country, insensibly leading them from earliest childhood into close sympathy and conformity with beauty and reason.

And that is why this stage of education is crucial. For rhythm and harmony penetrate deeply into the mind and take a most powerful hold on it, and if education is good, bring and impart grace and beauty, if it is bad, the reverse. And moreover the proper training we propose to give will make a man quick to perceive the shortcomings of works of art or nature, whose ugliness he will rightly dislike, anything beautiful he will welcome gladly, will make it his own and so grow in true goodness of character; anything ugly he will rightly condemn and dislike, even when he is still young and cannot understand the reason for so doing, while when reason comes he will recognize and welcome her as a familiar friend because of his upbringing... In my view that is the purpose of this stage of education."<sup>15</sup>

In the same context-Plato wrote: "Good literature, therefore, and good music, beauty of form and good rhythm all depend on goodness of character; I don't mean that lack of awareness of the world which we politely call 'goodness', but a mind and character truly well and fairly formed."<sup>16</sup>

Plato asks a question: "And are not these things which our young men must pursue, if they are to perform their function in life properly?" He himself answers: "They must. The graphic arts are full of the same qualities and so are the related crafts, weaving and embroidery, architecture and manufacture of furniture of all kinds; and the same is true of living things, animals and plants. For in all of these we find beauty and ugliness. And ugliness of form and bad rhythm and disharmony are akin to poor quality expression and character, and their opposites are akin to and represent good character and discipline."<sup>17</sup>

Plato considered music as the most powerful medium, more than any other medium, to create and influence rhythm and harmony in the soul, at the deepest level; hence a firm bondage is created between them, which, in turn, generates grace. One who has received that kind of education, i.e. of the inner life, will have the skill for understanding the weaknesses of particular arts as well as nature. With good taste one will adore truth, draw joy from it and will internalize it in one's personality, and will dislike and hate the bad and the evil and decry it openly, even in one's youth when he or she may not be fully aware of the reasons behind it.

Plato, as we have seen, has outlined, in a way, a treatise on the role the arts play in developing gracefulness in life during the early stages of education. It is evident that he talks about rhythm and harmony within the totality of life and of not only that which concerns visual arts and music. In other words, according to Plato, proper art education helps the individual to develop the sense necessary to understand what is good and what is evil. Where do we learn this from? Nature, of course.

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15. Plato: *The Republic*, Penguin Books, 1955, p. 163

16. ibid, p.162 The translator from Greek to English., Desmond Lee, wrote in the footnote that the Greek word translated 'goodness of character' can equally mean 'good nature', or as we might say 'goodness of heart'. But the Greek word also commonly means 'silly', 'naive'. The word translated 'lack of awareness of the world' means more literally 'silliness', 'lack of wit'. Plato is turning to ground aesthetic judgments on moral judgements, and is guarding himself against the charge that people of good character are often, in a rather simple-minded way unaware of the realities of life.

17. ibid, p.162

It will be a truism to say that making life graceful is one of the aims of life. Yet, here it is necessary to put it, and do so, in the wider context, i.e. of nature, of which human kind is an integral part. One can observe that a perpetual effort of nature is to create and maintain balance. It is true that some part of human behaviour is dictated by the conscious part of the mind, but most of it is spontaneous, a result of the natural forces that go on working all the time—call it the unconscious if you like. Unless social and environmental conditioning has distorted it, behaviour dictated by natural forces tends to follow the general pattern of nature, that is, of maintaining a balance.

Although an uneducated eye might consider the movements of a child who is starting to learn walking, awkward, it is not very different from the movements of a rope-dancer who is throwing all his or her limbs in all directions to keep the balance and make the dance graceful. The movements of the child too are the result of nature's efforts to create and maintain balance all the time. The patterns created by those movements of the child are similar to those created by a dancer.

When a heavy branch on one side of a well balanced tree breaks or is cutoff, the weight of the top of the tree falls more on to one side, thus displacing the centre of gravity. If the tree is not firmly set in the ground, it may fall on the heavier side, it may be uprooted or have broken branches. If it remains standing, in due course it will throw up new branches in a way that will bring back the lost balance, unless of course, in the meantime a new accident destroys the balance again. However, in that case too the effort will still go on.

The other important effort on the part of nature that goes on all the time is related to the functional aspect of its creations. Nature does not waste. It is not extravagant in its creativity. It uses only an essential quantity of the material necessary in the production of everything it makes. The botany expert will tell us that in the creation of an orange, for instance, every element that has been used in its making is unavoidable. Even the air pockets inside the orange are decided by the mathematics involved in making it, as it were. In nature's creations there is nothing that is unnecessary or out of proportion.

There is a close inter-relationship between beauty and functionality in nature. In fact, they are one and the same. In the art world, too, efforts to create beauty and the pursuit to achieve functionality have always been the same (except for those who divided the concept of art into two—fine arts and applied arts). They are the two sides of the same coin. Sometimes the two merge with each other and the pursuit for beauty becomes the pursuit for functionality, and vice versa.

It seems there are certain principles concerning the interrelationship between beauty and functionality in nature which govern all its creativity, and that they are based on mathematical calculations. Many art experts believe that "pattern-making" has its own mathematics. One has to learn it in order to make beautiful things. This point is supported by Indian aesthetics, specially in the treatises on sculpture and architecture, in which are given clear instructions on the sizes and proportions of different images of gods and goddesses, temples as well as living spaces. Experts have studied old Indian sculpture and buildings and found that a strict "grammar" has been followed in their making. These principles had become part of the religion of the people who lived in those houses and worshipped in those temples.

Artists and architects of the European Renaissance had formulated the well-known principle, Golden Section, also called Golden Mean. According to the *Dictionary of Art and Artists* by Peter and Linda Murray (published by Penguin Books) it "is the name given to an 'irrational proportion', known at least since Euclid, which has often been thought to possess some aesthetic virtue in itself, some hidden harmonic proportion in tune with the Universe. It is defined strictly as a line which is divided in such a way that the smaller part is to the larger as the larger is to the whole (AB cut at C, so that CB: AC = AC: AB). In practice it works out at about 8:13 and may easily be discovered in most works of Art." Proportions drawn from this principal were applied in the construction of churches, houses and most other forms of art creations.

The musical octave is probably the best example of the fact that mathematics plays a crucial role in the making of beautiful music. A little error or deviation from the required note or scale makes the music jarring to the ear. Those who appreciate good music would never like to hear any musical creation which does not follow these principles.

Unfortunately, for many people it is difficult to grasp the fact that functionality and beauty cannot be separated from each other. It is difficult because generally the current notion of beauty is associated with either realism or ornamentation and decorativeness, and even true functionality is confused with stinginess or being "inartistic". However, many modern designers do accept the above mentioned principle.

Herbert Read writes: "Some functional objects, it will be said, cannot by any conceivable chance be made beautiful. I will admit that it is sometimes difficult to see the possibility, but a little observation will soon show that the most unexpected objects can acquire an abstract kind of beauty. The motor car is the obvious example, but a better example still is the wireless receiving set, which in a short period of five or ten years made an enormous progress towards good design. Roger Fry once doubted whether a typewriter could ever be beautiful, but in recent years new designs for typewriters have been evolved which are infinitely better in shape and appearance than previous models, and though one might still hesitate to call them works of art, they are certainly progressing in that direction..."<sup>18</sup>

There is no need to discuss this point further, but I shall only recapitulate it briefly as follows. Beauty and functionality are essentially related to each other and there are certain principles, mathematical in nature, that govern their application. They can be learnt and applied intelligently.

#### ***Approaches to Art***

At a certain level, artistic creativity can be divided into two categories. One which is based on the artist's intuitive understanding of form in all its aspects and the other which is more inclined towards an intellectual approach. Intuition cannot be imparted or taught, but creativity which involves intellectual skills can be developed upto a certain level in most individuals. Hence, it should not be difficult to utilize the intellect and principles similar to those outlined above in the processes of learning art to an adequate level for the individual to find expression for his or her feelings, and by doing so grow into a better and fulfilled person. It, therefore, depends on the upbringing of the individual and education as a whole.

To put it differently, it means that whatever natural skills or aptitudes the individual may or may not be born with, with a healthy upbringing and sound education, he or she has the potential to develop into a good and creative being. Some people may not agree with such a statement. They believe that aptitude for artistic creativity is inborn and cannot be taught. Yes, to some extent it is true, specially about artists who have a fairly good degree of originality in their work and who are intuitively so. But it is also true that education plays an important role in building personality and imparting skills.

The best proof of artistic ability not being always inborn is in the fact that in the past the profession of an artist's/artisan's son was decided according to the family's tradition and not on the basis of what may be called the son's aptitude. For example, a painter's or a carpenter's son could not think of taking to any profession other than that of his father. It was expected that the son would carry on the family tradition. Although every artist's son could not have originality, he had to be sufficiently proficient in his profession to run his business well enough to be able to look after the needs of his family.

Every professional artist knows that apart from exceptional cases, training is an essential part of the process for reaching a certain level of proficiency. A dancer's body responds gracefully if it is trained from early childhood. To be a good singer it is essential to have a good voice, and even if one is not born with a good voice it is possible to train it to some extent, but only if it is done from the early years of one's life.

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18. Herbert Read: *Art And Industry*, Faber & Faber, London, 1945, p.52.

It is not implied that the aim of art education, for example of painting, is or should be to make everyone an artist-painter. Those who have it within themselves or those who will pursue it are more likely to reach a stage when they can be called artists. However, the most important aim of art education is to inculcate in every citizen an awareness and sensitivity to all the aspects of our environment, and grace in everyday life in other words, as already discussed, it is to develop the inclination and capacity to understand what is good and desirable and what is wrong and undesirable, not only for the individual but for society as a whole.

The foundations for this kind of sensitivity have to be laid from very early childhood. It is not necessary to mention here the well-known principle about the importance of the first three to five years of an individual's life, when much of one's future behaviour, attitudes and tastes are shaped. Many of the distortions too, which may not manifest at the time but become active later, have their seeds sown during that period and some even before birth. Proper art education holds out the possibility of softening and even eliminating these distortions. It is important that good education take care that such distortions do not take place in the life of children.

For building a sound and healthy personality of the individual a proper foundation has to be laid from the very beginning of childhood. It becomes too late and difficult, if not impossible, to change in later years. Experience of joy and fulfilment during the earliest days, months and years of the individual ensures healthy development during the future years too.

In this chapter we have discussed some key questions pertaining to the need for art education. The points that have been discussed here are important and relate to life as it is today. The defects in the planning and practice of education are responsible for the tension and selfishness that prevail in society today, and which ultimately result in conflict at all levels. Greed and the satisfying of greed seem to have become the goal of life. Fulfilment, instead of being inner satisfaction and joy, has come to mean physical and economic abundance and security, which has led to almost a total loss of values and the breakdown of human relationships and relations between human society and nature.

By sound planning of education, with art as its basis, a society should be able to re-establish some of the lost values and creativity that was once part of all cultures. After all, the main aim of life is to experience *aananda* ("bliss"). In the last paragraph of his book *Shilpa Katha*, Acharya Nandalal Bose writes: "In *Kundal Jataka*"<sup>19</sup> there is a story of *Kama-loka* (the realm of passion)... Beyond *Kama-loka* there is *Roopa-loka* (world of form), beyond which there is *Aroop-loka*, the world in which even form does not exist. I say that beyond that there is yet another world. It is *Aananda-loka* (the world of joy and bliss). *Kama-loka* is attachment. It considers the body as supreme, and therefore leads to blindness. In *Roopa-loka* you feel some vibrations of real life; in *Aroop-loka* you start experiencing the rhythmic vibrations of totality. In *Aananda-loka* there is essence, which is whole life."<sup>20</sup>

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19. *Kundal Jataka* : Jatakas are the stories of Buddha's previous lives that he lived in different times, forms and situations  
20. Nandalal Bose: *Shilpa Katha*, p.78

## The Children's Angle



*The most beautiful things in the creations of the child are his mistakes. "The more a child's work is full of these individual mistakes the more wonderful it is. And the more a teacher removes them from the child's work the duller, more desolate and impersonal it becomes.<sup>1</sup>*

It is neither sufficient nor justified to consider only the adult's approach in planning educational programmes for children, for the one who is at the receiving end is not an adult. The child's approach is very, if not entirely, different from that of the adult. Hence, for good educational planning it is also essential to take it into account. The child's approach does not give consideration to the end result of anything that he does or likes to do unless he has experienced its results first hand. Unlike the adult, the child does not have any value system governing his thinking and action. If there is anything a child considers desirable it is based on the elements of joy, satisfaction, accomplishment, recognition, and the argument behind the question: If you can do it, why can't I? There is yet another element that plays an important role in this respect. It is the wish to be like adults, not in every respect, but in selective matters, such as those which will allow their spirit of adventure to be satisfied.

Children are looking for new experiences all the time, and want to examine and put everything to test that attracts their eyes or feelings. If they like the experience, they want to repeat it until something new seems to be interesting or challenging. Things that the child gets attracted to are often those which the adults either do not see or are not interested in. In short, there are two different worlds—one is that of the adult and the other of the child. The subjects and methodologies of these worlds seem also to be different.

It is not that the adult is unable to see the things in which the child gets interested. The point to note here is that an item may be the same but its function, even its form and the angle from which it is viewed, will be different from the child's point of view. An illustration may be useful in explaining what I mean by there being two different worlds. Once I was reading a book in the light of a kerosene lamp, the only source of light available after sunset in Sevagram those days. My son, then only two, was sitting near me. Suddenly the light blew off causing some annoyance to me, but the child enjoyed it and laughed heartily. The object involved and the happening were the same for both of us, but their effects were different: one was of annoyance and the other of fun.

Every parent knows that children, specially very young ones, find it interesting to "mess" around in sand or mud; at that stage they do not have a perception of mud and sand being unclean or dirty. The most disturbing scene for a parent can be of their child "playing" with, picking up and even swishing around dead or live earthworms and insects. They tell the child off and drag him away from such an activity. The fact is that children's concepts of clean and dirty, good and bad, beautiful and ugly are not the same as those of adults. Nor can children make a link between values such as social consciousness and spiritual/religious awareness and the consequence of their activities. It is their urge to discover and draw pleasure from whatever they do that matters to them most. If a child experiences joy from an activity he or she will almost invariably wish to repeat it.

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1. Franz Cizek: Quoted by Wilhelm Viola in *Child Art*. University of London Press Ltd. 1945, p.33

We are going to limit the area of this discussion only to art activities, particularly drawing and painting and allied subjects. We shall explore and identify the various ways in which children enjoy art activities and draw from them a sense of fulfilment. Almost all children like drawing pictures. This fact becomes obvious when you place colours and paper in front of them and ask if they would like to make pictures. Most children will jump at the offer. A few will shy- away, some on account of timidity, others for some other reasons, which we shall discuss at a later stage. In this chapter, let us examine the various ways children enjoy art activities and fulfil their emotional and intellectual needs. Such an exercise, hopefully, will provide a good understanding of children to teachers and parents.

### ***Joy of Doing***

A carpenter's son, perhaps not even two years old, sitting near his father who is working with his tools, sees him using a hammer. One day he picks up the hammer and starts banging it around; probably in a manner that suggests he is making something. It is unlikely that he has any such concrete objective in mind. He is unaware of the purpose of the tool, as it is understood by his father. Yet he derives pleasure and satisfaction from the very exercise of doing something using the hammer, the use of his muscles, the movement of hands, shoulders and fingers.

Different activities provide different kinds of satisfaction to different parts of the body. Using a carpenter's tool evokes one kind of response, and using colours, a brush, pencil and paper, another kind of feeling. Apart from various other aspects of an activity, the mere using of the material, of doing something, is by itself a pleasurable experience.

### ***Joy of Accomplishment***

Most people, adults as well as children, derive great sense of satisfaction from the completion of an activity of creating some object. Tools, clay, painting material, if made easily available, are taken as a challenge by children, as if it were an invitation saying: Come on! Can you do something with us? Can you make something? The child cannot resist such a challenge, he or she picks up the material, makes something, and says to herself or himself: See, I have done it! This sense of satisfaction, that I have accomplished something', is a source of self-confidence for the child. An interesting proof of this phenomenon is the expression you witness on the faces of the children when they go on staring at their own paintings in an exhibition of their work arranged in their school. I had observed that at the time of the opening of these exhibitions the first things children did was to go and stand in front of their paintings and admire them. I heard them make comments such as: Oh! Look, this is my painting. How nice it is!

### ***Child's Language***

Although children do not have the language of words to a degree that would make them express much of what they have stored within themselves, they do have a language which allows them to express their experiences and tell stories fairly effectively. The fact is that their experiences and stories are generally made up with visual forms. For instance, if there is a *hill* in a story, it will be made up of a symbolic shape of a hill and not in the form of the word, hill. They will feel satisfied only if they are able to express something as it exists in their inner experience and emotions. There is often no word for a picture in their heads only concrete forms, through which alone they can tell their stories adequately. Hence, for children expressing themselves through the language of forms is more satisfying than doing so by the language of words. To be able to express their feelings and experiences successfully is a source of joy and fulfilment.

### ***Communication***

Adults may be able to control their urge to communicate their feelings to others. However, for children it is not only hard but also unhealthy if they are unable or not allowed to communicate their thoughts, wishes and feelings to others. The language of visual forms, expressed by drawing and painting or drama, music and dance, comes to the child more naturally and spontaneously than that of words, which is a kind of "imposed" skill and belongs to the world of adults. Therefore, it is important that children be given ample opportunities for self-expression in a language which comes to them more naturally than the language of

words. The degree of satisfaction they derive from successful self-expression is an indication of the growth of the child's personality.

#### **Dramatic Aspect**

In one of my art classes, a boy almost twelve years of age, made a painting on a theme entitled: A Rainy Day. The picture depicted a boy with an umbrella walking towards a bullock tied to a tree a few yards away. All of a sudden he slipped, fell down and his umbrella flew and fell at some distance away from him. This young artist took a couple of periods to complete the painting. The day he was giving the finishing touches to the painting he took it, kept it a few yards away from his seat, and walked backwards, looking at it with some kind of dramatic movements representing the situation of the boy in the picture. Neither he nor any other child in the class knew that I was watching him all the time. He was totally engrossed in the theme of the picture and actually playing the role of the "boy with the umbrella". He literally acted several times the slipping and falling down as the boy in the picture. He was, in fact, experiencing the drama of the picture within himself with great intensity and, I suppose, also satisfaction. He was not acting the scene to show it to others. In fact, none of his classmates notices him when he was acting out the scene.

On another occasion, a child of the younger group made a drawing of a motor car. While making the drawing of the vehicle, every now and then he acted as if his hands were on the steering wheel and he was driving it, occasionally hooting to mimic the sound of the horn. Looking at this aspect of children's art activity I realized that they, like great artists, identify themselves, physically as well as mentally, with the object they draw or model.

In his essay, *Chinese Painting in Boston*, which was a commentary on an exhibition, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy wrote: "The Chinese artist does not merely observe but *identifies* himself with the landscape of whatever it may be that he will represent. The story is told of a famous painter of horses who was found one day in his studio rolling on his back like a horse; reminded that he might really become a horse, he ever afterwards painted only Buddhas. An icon is made to be imitated, not admired. In just the same way, in India the imager is required to identify himself in detail with the form to be represented. Such an identification, indeed, is the final goal of any contemplation reached only when the original distinction of subject from object breaks down and there remains only the knowing, in which the knower and the known are merged. If this seems at all strange to us whose concept of knowledge is always objective, let us at least remember that an "identification" was also presupposed in medieval European procedure; in Dante's words, "He who would paint a figure, if he cannot be it, cannot draw it."<sup>2</sup>

I am not implying that there is no difference in the work of great artists and the art of children, or that the dynamics of the breaking down of the "original distinction of subject from object" is identical in both the cases. Nonetheless, it must be realized that due to their innocence, the knowledge that children, who have not yet been inhibited by adult values and perspective, store in their mind is mostly not "objective".

The dynamics of this kind of identification can be partially explained by the fact that to make the visual observation come alive, the artist's body, along with his or her mind, absorbs the movements and the spirit of the object being recreated in the work. The innocence and directness help children in such an identification, ordinarily possible for true artists only. However, the important point is that children derive much joy from the dramatic aspect inherent in art activities.

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2. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: 'Chinese Painting at Boston'. This essay was published in *The Magazine of Art*, XXXVI (1944) as a commentary on an exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. From: R. Lipsey, Coomaraswamy, Princeton University, N.J., U.S.A., Vol. 1; p309

### ***Imagery***

Children are versatile in their imagination and they spend much time in imagining all kinds of things, specially related to the stories they hear from their parents or other elders and the experience they gather in their lives. For instance, while playing with a heap Of sand a child makes a hole in it, and it becomes a house or, a palace, and the heap of sand a mountain. A few twigs inserted in the sand become a forest, armies, crowds of men and women, motor cars or what have you.

Drawings made by children during their early years look like scribbles to adults, but for them they can be people, the sun, moon, houses, or anything that they have in their mind at a given time. We shall discuss children's drawings and their psychogenesis in the next chapter. Here, the purpose of taking up the subject is only to point out that art activities help children expand their world of imagination and enthuse them to repeat their experiences whenever they are able to do so.

### ***Self-Expression***

Self-expression is a human necessity. It is natural and goes on all the time. Human feelings find their outlets in several ways. A poet gives form to them by writing poems, a painter by painting pictures and a musician by making music. As you go on expressing your feelings, other feelings keep coming, which you want to express. If one's inner feelings do not get adequate and timely outlets, they tend to become stale and often create inhibitions, which can be an unhealthy development for the personality. The place where feelings dwell in a person is like a container, which needs emptying and cleaning out every now and then. If the contents remain inside for too long they may rot and create all kinds of problems. Another factor to be taken into account is that no fresh contents can be put into the container until some of the old ones have been taken out.

It is only an accomplished yogi who can control his or her feelings by conscious efforts and not allow them to be inhibited; not only that, a yogi can make them non-existent. But for us, the ordinary folk, we have to find a harmless, feasible, and if possible, a creative way to deal with our feelings. And when it comes to children, talking about the methods used by yogis, or even mature adults, is meaningless. Children have to be provided with adequate activities to express themselves in a healthy manner.

Art activities are the most effective medium, which allow creative expression for children to express themselves and experience joy in doing so. As an art teacher it was always a great satisfaction having children of age groups between seven and eleven coming and describing the contents of their drawings in detail. It was even more satisfying to listen to children of the nursery section of the school explaining the "scribbles" they made in their classes.

### ***Health Outlet to Aggression***

It cannot be over-emphasized that if aggressiveness does not get a timely outlet it aggravates and can lead to further aggression and eventually frustration. Frustration may express itself against others or one's own self in the form of an outburst of violence. It can turn into depression, apathy or self-destruction. Educators believe that one of the objectives of education should be to control aggressiveness right from the very early stages of education. There can be various ways to deal with this matter, depending upon the situation and the nature of aggression.

An example of a situation, not very uncommon in schools and families, will help to illustrate the point. An eleven-year old child in the Sevagram school had some extra energy, which he tried to let out by hitting or harassing younger children. The school was a self-reliant residential community and was managed by a body elected every month from among all the teachers and students. It had its own kitchen, in which all the work was done by the teachers and students. They took turns doing different jobs.

Wood was used as fuel for cooking. Logs of wood had to be split in small pieces with an axe. During one term this boy was encouraged to take up the task of fuel supply. He organized the job with two other

volunteers. It was hard work but this boy really enjoyed using the axe in which, by the way, he quickly became quite proficient. It was amazing how satisfied and peaceful he used to feel after supplying wood to the kitchen every day during his position as the "fuel supply minister" of the community. The violence was channelled into cutting and splitting the wood and must have provided him with an outlet for all the extra energy he had, which was waiting to be let out. He became more calm in his behaviour. He started painting pictures of national heroes and heroines and battle scenes. Drawing and painting does provide an excellent outlet for children's aggressiveness. It can be called sublimation of aggressiveness.

#### ***Social Recognition and Wish Fulfilment***

The last item I want to mention in this context is the element of wish fulfilment inherent in art expression. I shall try to explain this phenomenon by giving a simple example of an adolescent girl in my class. This was a fifteen-year-old girl, but mentally she was not more than eight or nine.

To begin with, she was extremely shy and probably without any self-confidence. She sat quietly in all the classes and did nothing, nor did she say anything. All the teachers considered her nearly useless, socially and intellectually. She herself knew that nobody cared for her. In the art class also she did nothing for months. I thought that even though she may be a really "useless" member of the community, we should not do anything that would worsen her sense of inferiority. I, therefore, made a point of talking to her and tried to make her feel that I was always happy to see her and hoped that she would one day start making pictures. To my surprise, one day she came from behind my seat and pushed a piece of paper in front of me and ran away.

The paper had a bright golden patch resembling a person sitting on a floor. This, her first attempt to say something, was probably the expression of her joy and gratitude to the teacher for being treated like any other child in the class. Later, she told me that it was my portrait! The next time I asked her to make a picture specially for me to keep. She made a picture of an elephant which looked like one drawn by a folk artist. I was amazed at its aesthetic content and realized that she had an abundance of it. I went on encouraging her to make more paintings for me. At last she discovered herself, and in due course she became our best painter, recognized by the community. She gained self-confidence and started working assiduously in the art class.

Art activities, at the same time, liberated her enough to be able to express her inner feelings and ambitions. As a girl of fifteen/sixteen, every now and then, she would paint colourful pictures with different compositions of a bride sitting in a wedding canopy. A village girl who hardly had any prospect of becoming an independent individual, could only wish to get "properly" married!

#### ***An Experiment***

In this chapter I have tried to describe some of the important aspects of art activities in which children experience joy, and which generate a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment. Now I want to describe one of the projects we conducted with older children, twelve to fourteen years of age. It was to write and publish books. This experiment was aimed at a wide range of factors, emotional as well as intellectual, involved in the personality development of children.

One evening, a boy who used to take a special interest in art activities, came to me and said he had a serious question which was bothering him and which he would like to ask me. The question was: How do people write books? I tried to answer the question in a rather simplistic manner. I said: When someone has something to say, describe, or elaborate, he or she writes it down on paper. After revising and polishing the text, it is offered to firms called publishers. If the publishers like it they will print dozens or hundreds of copies of the book for the market.

The young artist was not satisfied, because he wanted to know how wrote a book, and not by whom or how it is published. He, perhaps, wanted to know enough on the subject to equip himself for writing books. I told him that if he himself had something to say or communicate to others he could write it down

in the same way as he would write a letter or an essay, as he would sometimes write in his class. If someone has something to tell others, or argue, he or she can write it in the form of a book. Then I said to him: If you wish to do so, you too can write one. He found the proposal exciting and expressed his wish to write a book. Noticing his enthusiasm I suggested that he should raise the question in the next art class, when all the children would be present to discuss the question. They too might be interested in trying their hand at it.

The next afternoon, when everyone had come to the art class, this enthusiast raised his hand and insisted that we should first deal with the question: How do people write books? He presented a report of our previous day's conversation and his decision to write a book. For about half an hour the same kind of conversation took place, this time in a group, with most of the children taking part. Everyone was excited at the prospect of becoming authors of books, previously an unheard of possibility for children of that age. I asked the whole class: "Who among you would like to write your own books?" Almost everyone raised their hands. I was not surprised, but I knew that some would be dropouts when it came to specifics.

Now the next step was to choose themes for their books. That was a bit tough for some of them. Out of the thirteen children present in the class, only six were able to take a definite decision to work on the project, which would be strictly of fifteen-days duration. They chose their themes too. One chose to write Mahabharata, another Ramayana—the two great epics—the third decided to write the story of Child Lord Krishna, the other three said that they would write the lives of their favourites saints: Mirabai, Sakhubai and Gyaneshwara.

After a fairly detailed group consultation the would be authors decided that work on the project would include collecting information material, check it with any of the teachers, revising and editing the text, writing it in some kind of a neat and attractive style with simple decorations on each page to make it look like a proper book, illustrating the story with at least ten paintings of their own, arranging the material in systematic manner, giving a page each for the list of contents and the list of illustrations, and a page for the author's birth, date and/or any other information he or she wanted to give, hand-binding the book and launching it.

Every author was free to choose or devise his or her own style. My role in the whole project was mainly to give companionship to the writers, illustrators and calligraphists, bookbinders and publishers. It -was a bit taxing, being a twelve-hour day, continuously for fifteen days, but was most creative and enjoyable. It proved to be very enriching.

It was now my task to convince the staff council to allow the experiment to be conducted by giving full freedom from other activities and responsibilities to these six children. The would-be authors would have freedom to go and meet anyone at any sensible time, including some people in the nearby village, to do the research necessary to compile the material for their books. They were exempted from attending classes on other subjects and also from the three-hour morning sessions of basic craft or agriculture.

It was indeed a unique experience for these six children; in fact for the whole school, but it was more so for me personally. For fifteen days continuously these children came to the class, which was next to my residence, started their work at a very early hour of the day and continued until sunset. They had to be literally, picked up and pushed out from the classroom when the breakfast, lunch and dinner bell rang. Not even once did I or for that matter anyone else had to remind them of their project work that had to be finished in fifteen days.

The task of the authors of life stories of saints was a bit more complicated than that of the epic writers. Generally speaking, the ears of most children of that community had been saturated with stories from the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. However, as far as the lives of the saints was concerned, except for some of their songs which were fairly popular, none of the children knew much about their lives. It was clear to them that whatever they already knew of the life stories and songs of their favourite

saints could not be considered sufficient for their books. They would have to collect much more than that from every possible source they could find, from teachers, senior members of the Ashram community and people of the Sevagram village.

Exactly on the fifteenth day six beautiful books were "published". One of the authors went so far as "printing" on the back cover of his book the list, "Our Publications". One of the children told me in a deeply emotional tone "...Until yesterday I had not realized that our books will turn out to be so good." Another shouted from a distance "Oh, yes, we were not sure whether these will really be books or something else."

The most important outcome of this project was the enhancement of the self-image and confidence of these children. For me, it opened new windows into the inner world of the child, and an insight into the inherent potential of childhood. Children can accomplish tasks which adults do not dare due to hesitation and inhibitions acquired during their adulthood. The self-esteem of these children rose to a healthy level. I had known rather well that art helps the creator in knowing himself or herself. I also knew that the process of self-expression leads to *self-knowing*. But the above experiment gave me further insight into the power of self-expression. When a child realizes that within him there is a rich source of creativity, he feels strong and is drawn to beauty and courage, and eventually becomes a fulfilled person, therefore, one who is naturally predisposed to goodness, peace and cooperation.

Experiencing joy through creative activities is an extremely important element for child development, and the major reason behind children taking interest in art activities is the joy it provides them. In this chapter we have discussed the various ways children experience joy and satisfaction through art activities. The main point to make here is that if the teacher realizes that joy and satisfaction, *Aanand*, is a major objective of education, art should logically become the basis of education.

## Psychogenesis of Child Art



*The art of children is supremely important for this very reason: it is the earliest and most exact index to the child's individual psychology. Once the psychological tendency or trend of a child is known, its own individuality can be developed by the discipline of art, till it has its own form and beauty, which is its unique contribution to the beauties of human nature.<sup>1</sup>*

Until now, my effort has been to explore the various aspects of art education related to the individual and his relationship with the whole of humankind and the environment. We also discussed the goals we want to set for educational programmes on the basis of what we know to be the potential of art education, we have also to discover the natural instincts of the child and the way he or she can and does express himself or herself through creative activities, particularly in the context of the present discussion, i.e. drawing and painting and allied activities. If we ignore the inherent nature of children while planning educational programmes, we shall be imposing adult notions and objectives on them, which would mean not allowing them to fully enjoy their childhood in their own world and to grow accordingly.

According to Indian folklore, a child taught without taking its instincts into consideration is like a caged parrot which has forgotten its own language, but can go on repeating the words taught to him by his master. The present system of education is an example of that very-phenomenon i.e. teachers trying to turn children into parrots and depriving them of their childhood. Do we want to continue with such a system of education?

I was lucky to have started my experiments with children of all age groups; and that too with children, who had never had any experience in drawing and painting as such. They were mostly from a poor rural background. Even the children of the staff and other workers of the Sevagram Ashram were new to these activities. I realized that it was just the right situation to be in for learning aesthetic characteristics and the natural manner in which children could express themselves through art activities. To start with, I needed to understand the pattern and pace of their growth and the kind of drawings they would make at different stages of their growth, especially as they had not yet been spoilt by the so-called educated adult world.

If children were not only allowed but also encouraged to remain in their own world as long as it was necessary for their natural course of development, they would grow into well-fulfilled persons. They would also be more adequately prepared for adult life than those children whose natural ladder of growth has been squeezed and shortened for the sake of making them quickly row into adulthood. This belief inspired me to minutely observe the art activities of children, to try to discover the nature of those activities and the length of the natural ladder of their growth, specially related to art expression.

No work of significance had yet been done in this field in our country, except that Rabindranath Tagore had encouraged self-expression by children of his school at Santiniketan, and I had the opportunity to get familiar with that work through my teacher, Nandalal Bose. In fact, some records show that Tagore had visited Franz Cizek in Vienna. I have no doubt that with his understanding of children, he must have been impressed by Cizek's work with them.

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1. Herbert Read: *Education Through Art*, Faber and Faber, London, 1945.

It was Cizek who popularized the term child art, though already in 1905 Georg Kerschensteiner, superintendent of the Munich schools had published a book, *Die Entwicklung der Zeichnerischen Begabung* (The Development of the Graphic Gift), which was the result of the examination of 3,00,000 drawings and pictures of 58,000 Munich school children. Kerschensteiner pointed out the fact, surprising to most people at the time, that the best work did not come from the children of artists, sculptors, architects, well-to-do families and parents with high intellectual attainment in general, but mostly- from children of simple, even poor artisans. In 1928, Wulff, another German, said in his book The Art of the Child: "The task of art teaching is to educate the average talent so far as it can be educated, that is to represent reality directly from perception as it is seen and not as merely imagined." In 1922, G.F. Hartlaub wrote The Genius in Child and defended with great warmth the child's urgent necessity to create, and analysed many aspects of child art.

There was another German, Gustaf Britisch, who had a clear view of child art, which he expressed in *Theory of Pictorial Art* (1931). His practical influence, though, was not very great, and he and his disciple Kornmann faced much opposition. Franz Cizek used to say that what Britisch and Kornmann had found mostly in theory was proved in his own fifty years of practical work with children.<sup>2</sup> Although Franz Cizek worked only in "Vienna, his influence on the British system of education of young children was significant. Next to the British were the North Americans in introducing the concepts of child art in their early school programmes.

In my groping in the dark, with full faith and confidence, I continued to explore and practice whatever I found and thought was of significance for the health and happy development of our children. I tried to find out what a child would do with paper and pencil, when he was able to hold it. If given total freedom during the period of his entire childhood to do whatever the child can or would like to do, what kind of drawings and pictures would the child make? What would be the characteristics of the development of the child's art? That was my query. I found that in an environment of healthy freedom, the work of the child goes on changing in certain stages, which can be clearly defined. The reason I attributed to this kind of growth was based on the fact that children go on gaining new experiences all the time and the more they are able to, express, give an outlet to their accumulated experiences, the more they gain new ones. The other factor that became obvious to me was that children, much more than adults, want to say something about their new experiences. They have not yet learnt to hide anything, and because art expression comes partly from the conscious part of the mind, but mostly from the unconscious and subconscious, it does bring out things from the inner being 'pure and frank', particularly in the case of children. Not yet having developed the language of words, art expression becomes the major medium children can use to communicate their feelings, wishes and dreams. From the drawings and pictures made by children we also learn about the pace and quality of their development and their nature.

### ***Stages of Children's Art Expression***

Generally speaking, children pass through the following stages in their art expression:

#### *Two to four years*

Scribbling and getting familiar with tools and material.

Use of hands and muscular movements.

#### *Four to six years*

Stage of symbols and naming the drawings.

#### *Seven to eight years*

Getting away from infantile stage. Beginning of visual realism.

#### *Nine to eleven years*

Stage of disillusionment and discouragement.

#### *Eleven to fourteen years*

Early adolescence and confusion.

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2. Wilhelm Viola: *Child Art*, University of London Press, p. 14-15

*Fourteen years and after*  
Possibility of the stage of artistic revival.

Most children go through the above stages of development. It is difficult to assign specific age groups for these stages. We shall discuss this aspect when we go into each stage in some detail. The time of transition from one stage to the other depends on each child's nature and pace of growth. It is also difficult to say how long a child continues to remain in each of these stages. It was noticed that some children passed through the first stage in a matter of weeks, but others took months. It has to be remembered that in general, these stages are not static, as children go on moving from one experience to another, thus grow continuously. These stages are not clear cut periods in themselves, they overlap with each other.

Sometimes, you may be surprised to see a child move on to the next stage all of a sudden!

I also learnt that the evolution of children's drawings is of the same nature and almost identical all over the world, and that children do not draw what they see but what they *know*. These observations clearly point to the fact that art activities can become creative and pleasant for children.<sup>3</sup>

***Scribbling Stage***

As soon as a child is able to hold a pencil it starts scratching it on any available surface. If it is paper or a surface on which the pencil marks can be made, children like scribbling on it. The scribblings do not represent anything in particular. It is the child's effort to make acquaintance with the material and at the same time to make bodily movements. Children also like to feel that they are doing what their parents or other adults do. Sometimes, when asked what he has drawn the child will think and call it something on the spur of the moment. Generally the human figure is the favourite, (*illus. nos. 20 to 23*)

***Stage of Symbols***

This stage comes when the child has had enough of scribbling without having anything in mind about what the scribbles represent. He has already started giving names to his drawings. Now he begins to associate his drawings with objects from the world outside his own self, objects which he is familiar with. They have no likeness with the object but the child says it does. He creates symbols in his mind. These symbols have no long term relevance, for the same drawing can become different things at different times. In due course, these symbols acquire some kind of permanency. For instance, a circular shape with two smaller circles in the top half and one in the bottom half is a human face. The same round shape can be papa, mama or any one else, depending on the occasion. The artist is totally subjective in his experiences as well as expressions, (*illus. nos. 1, 7, 8, 11, 14, 19, 24 to 33, 35, 39, 40, 43*)

***Stage of Visual Realism***

Gradually these symbols change. The change is caused by new experiences. Children go on noticing new aspects of the same thing, which influences the form and even style of the symbol. For instance, at first a human face was a large circle with two smaller circles, representing the two eyes. Then the mouth comes into the picture and then perhaps the nose. The mouth and the nose may be only two tiny lines—one

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<sup>3</sup> A very pleasant surprise greeted me at the time, when I had already done a substantial amount of work and when I was deeply engrossed with the writing of this book. I used to feel lonely as there was no one to discuss how and why of the ideas and experiences I was gathering from my work. It was obvious that the subject was new to our situation and not many of my colleagues could grasp the significance of the work I was trying to do. One day, just out of the blue, I received a book by post, sent by a dear friend of mine. He knew about my being a teacher of art, but I do not know how on earth he came to know about my concern for child art. The book was none other than Herbert Read's Education Through Art. As an art student I had known and read some of Herbert Read's books such as Art and Industry, Art and Society and some on art history. One batch of students at the art college in Santiniketan admired his writings. However, I had not known about this work, which I found was a later one. The title itself attracted me. Of course, I said to myself, real education can only be received through art. When I opened the book, my eyes fell upon the sentence: The thesis is: Art should be the basis of education. Lo! I got what I was looking for, the greatest support for my work. Not only support but also companionship. I was no longer lonely! Gradually, I was able to obtain accounts of work done in the field of child art in different parts of the world. Luckily, I managed to acquire some important books on the subject, and learnt a great deal from them.

horizontal and the other vertical. In due course the ears, hair, neck etc. are also seen. With the development of objectivity in their visual observation, these symbols start looking somewhat "realistic". The more children start seeing in that manner the more they begin to compare the drawings with the objects themselves. The kind of change in their faculty of looking at the outer world brings a "realistic" approach into their drawings.

There is probably another reason behind this change. Until now the child was an introvert. Everything that he saw or experienced was interpreted with subjectivity. Now he has started to experience objectivity. His world now is becoming more intricate and he is able to establish some relationship with the world around. In other words, he gets out of himself. His pictures show the signs of realism, (*illus. nos. 5, 9, 13, 47 to 51* and cover illus.)

An individual's qualities and capacities are not sufficient requirements for deciding the way his or her growth should take place. Social and environmental factors play a crucial role in dictating the ways and goals of human growth.

#### ***Stage of Disillusionment***

Children try to do everything in the way their elders do. It is not that they feel they are also adults, but that they want to be as good as their elders in work. In the case of art activities they remain themselves as long as they have not started looking at the world more objectively. Awareness of the outside world makes an impact on their motivation and the ways of self-expression.

At this stage, most children do not feel the same encouragement as they did during their earlier stage of art expression. Now they expect themselves to be able to draw like adults. It should be pointed out that this kind of comparison could not have taken place in the older pattern of life in India, or for that matter in many parts of the world. For instance, the gap between the art of folk traditions and that of the children could not have been so wide as to create a spirit of comparison in the minds of children. But the popular standards of taste and design, today, are such that if children follow them as their model, the direction of their growth would entirely change and their development become distorted.

In the absence of an atmosphere sympathetic to their nature and correct growth requirements, the journey in the direction of their goal, i.e. the imitation of popular taste, examples of which they see all around them, makes children feel frustrated and gives them a sense of defeatism. This is what I call the stage of discouragement and disillusionment. This is the stage, when the child wants to do something that will be accepted by the adults. In other words, he does it for others and not for himself; just the opposite of what he was doing until now.

It would be worth studying how an individual's growth in art expression takes place in a society in which indigenous art traditions are alive and active and occupy a place of honour. Let us look at the tribal society (as it is called by the urban people). It has its own standards of taste and their art is far from being realistic. There is not even an effort to make their drawings with a likeness to optical reality. That is the main reason why the drawings of their children made during their adolescence are not very different from the adults' paintings. This was true in almost all the tribal and rural societies. In some societies it is true even today.

The conclusion that I draw is that it is wrong on the part of contemporary society to force or even expect realism in the paintings of children. It leads to an unnatural development, in fact mis-development, of the child's personality, and eventually of his creative potential. If realism had been a matter of natural growth, why then does it not happen in tribal society? Children's drawings there too should have first taken the turn to realism and only after that phase would they have been influenced by the drawings made by adults, which have always been predominantly symbolic. On the contrary, children's drawings in tribal communities do not have to pass through such a temporary and forced phase. There, children's symbolism may be of a category different from that of the adults, but there is neither a break in the development of

their art expression nor frustration created in them because they are unable to draw like the adults, specially when they are entering a stage which leads into adulthood.

Genuine child art is created only when the child does it for his or her own inspiration and satisfaction and not anybody else's. It is only then that the child's aesthetic creativity finds true expression and develops at a natural pace.

#### ***Adolescence and Confusion***

Adolescence, by itself, is a separate subject for educators. Many people consider it to be a difficult age. Some even call it the age of crisis. Whatever it may be, there is no doubt that it is an entirely new experience for the child. For him the whole world changes. The psychology of the child changes when he is just entering or has just entered the adolescent stage. This change is partly due to the physical growth in the child's own body, and his almost suddenly becoming aware of it. It may even become an obsession occupying his mind continuously. On account of the fear of social stigma and their own shyness most children are not able to talk about it. As a result they do not find the necessary explanation, an explanation that would relieve them of the pressures within. They are distracted from other activities and interests. Whereas the bodily demands become more like those of the adult, the mind is not quite prepared to respond to the new situation. In other words, the stage of early adolescence in fact is a stage of confusion.

Towards the end of the last stage, the child has started becoming conscious of the actual form of objects that he tries to draw. With the advent of adolescence that kind of awareness makes a very significant impact on drawing. Now his or her eyes do not want to see any visual difference between the object and the drawing that he or she wants to make, which seems difficult. He feels defeated. The new awareness, generally, takes the child away from art work.

Most teachers believe that in cases other than those of born artists, the stage of defeatism is inevitable. They believe that it is a natural and normal step in the ladder of growth and that everyone has to pass through the period of crisis. We shall discuss this topic later, but for our present purpose let us agree that in today's situation, educationally and socially, the crisis of adolescence will inevitably occur, and unless the educational thinking and planning does not change, crises, not only in art teaching but in every aspect of life will remain problematic. We shall now discuss each of these stages in some detail.

#### ***Child's First Scribbling***

One of the first things noticed in the movements/activities of babies is the way they try to put everything into their mouth. It is because the baby's introduction to the outside world takes place first through the mouth, for fulfilling the most important need for survival—sucking is its first method of knowing and feeling the objects that are around. Then comes knowing by touching and holding by hand, first by the fist. Then comes the feeling of holding hard or soft, liquid or pasty material which challenges and motivates the baby to bang it around, mess about or spill. I have no doubt these are the most important activities for children at that stage to gain first-hand knowledge of the world around.

#### ***Tools and Materials***

When a child gets hold of something that can make marks on a surface, and sees others using that material or having discovered its use by accident, the child will try it over and over again for pleasure, further discovery, practice and demonstration (*illus. no. 21*). This activity changes and develops along with increasing muscular control of the hand and shoulders. Until the control reaches the stage of holding with the fingers and the control of wrist movements improves it will hold the pencil with the whole fist and make the scribblings by moving the arm and shoulder simultaneously. Until now the wrist and the elbow have not developed their independent movements. Let us call it, the stage of muscular movements. Scribblings of this period are circular (*illus. no. 20*). When wrist movements become independent of the shoulder, and the fingers replace the wrist movements, these scribblings are generally made from one side to the other, and tend to become angular (*illus. no. 23*).

At this stage, the child does not make drawings of particular things. Even if asked to name the scribble he or she will say nothing. That is because there is nothing in the child's mind either before or after the drawing is made. It is pure self-expression through bodily movements and scribbling.

#### **Naming the Scribblings**

After gaining certain degree of dexterity in the use of the tool, e.g. pencil or crayon, children start doing some sort of purposive scribbling, and giving names to the drawing when asked. These scribblings are not necessarily related to the form or shape of the object named. The child is fully satisfied by giving a name, some name, to the drawing (*illus. nos. 24 & 25*).

The next step in this stage is more or less purposive in concrete terms. The child now has something specific in mind. This is the beginning of the stage of symbols. Children's first favourite subject is the human figure, which acquires a fairly correct representation (*illus. nos. 27 & 30*). This is after attaining sufficient control over the finger movements.

Some teachers believe that this kind of planning relates to a fixed form in the mind of the child. But our experience is that the form goes on changing. If the child gives a name to a particular symbol, it does not mean that for that very object the child will always draw the same form. There is a symbolic schema in the child on the basis of which the pictures—of ten human figures—are drawn.

It is to be noted that although the general schema may look the same with different children, it varies in its interpretation of the form of the object depicted. The child is now quite clear, either consciously or otherwise, about what is to be drawn; it is, after all, the expression of his or her inner experiences. The child still draws what he *knows* and not what he sees. It is more logical for him than being visually correct or incorrect. Adult onlookers, who understand the child, accept this logic.

#### **What are Symbols?**

Generally speaking most teachers and adults do not understand the phenomena that is so important for the child. This results in a lack of comprehension and sympathy for the work of the child artist. Whereas the forms the child visualizes are symbols and not realistic representations of the outside world, the teacher expects the child to grasp the realistic form and make the drawing look like the object itself. They do not realize that the child is expressing his or her personal experiences by the use of those symbols, and not drawing the things as they are seen.

An illustration: There was a child in one of the families of the teaching staff in Sevagram. He did nearly nothing in terms of handling pencil and paper until he was three years old. Soon after he entered his fourth year he started handling crayons. One day when he was playing with crayons and paper, I asked him what he had made. His reply was: "Picture"

After a little while he called me and said: "Look at this snake, how long!" It was a vertical line. After a few more moments he drew another "snake" and yet another. The second one was such that its two ends touched the two ends of the earlier one. This little artist shouted, "See, Rama's bow and arrow." He drew another double line, with their two ends touching each other's across the bow and said with greater enthusiasm: "Ramachandrajji is shooting an arrow." This child had seen the story of Rama played on the school stage by the children only a few days ago. After the stage show, playing with concocted bows and arrows had become a popular game among the school children. This child had created his picture as a symbol for "bow and arrow". Later he either made the drawing first and said it was "Rama's bow and arrow" or announced it first and then made the drawing.

There was a time when most of our art forms were predominantly symbolic. Everyone knew the language of the symbols used in his or her society to make paintings, sculptures, dance, music and all the arts. It was common for an average citizen to be able to understand and enjoy the symbolism of all the art forms prevalent in that society. It would have been a matter of illiteracy on the part of someone to say that a

painting was not good because it did not look like the real object depicted or the person portrayed. For instance there are paintings in the Ajanta caves which are by no means realistic. There are paintings that look like three-dimensional drawings of pieces of rocks representing mountains. But nobody raises the question their not looking like real mountains. It only shows that an average person looking at these paintings understood the meaning of the symbolism involved.

Symbolism was a common feature in India and many other Oriental societies until only a century or so ago. European art before the Renaissance was also symbolic to a large extent. After the 13th century European art became more and more realistic. So much so that at one stage good art was only that which was wholly realistic. That is one of the reasons why in more recent times the majority of adults were unable to accept children's drawings as art.

The example of an Australian tribal group might further help to understand children's art expression. C.P. Mountford of the South Australian Museum has worked among the Australian aborigines and has collected valuable information. He wrote that in "...the drawings of the central Australian aborigines... Instead of depicting the particular animal, human being or object in a naturalistic manner, a conventional symbol is used... Symbols, which in one drawing represent a water hole, will in another illustrate a hill or a camp..." In a reply to a query from Herbert Read, Mountford said: "The children of the Australian aborigines also draw from an early age, and their drawings, in general, resemble those of the adults."<sup>4</sup>

The point that I am trying to make is that in a society in which art expression has a prominent place and in which symbolism in art is valued more than realism, the art of its children will not have any danger of being unduly forced into realistic expression.

It is not difficult to understand Symbolism, mainly because in the ordinary course of living, we use symbols all the time. It is a matter of training as of developing the correct approach and attitude. If it is realized that the imagination and expression in child art during its earlier stages is predominantly symbolic, and that the symbols the child creates and uses have no philosophical basis or imitation, then it will be easier to comprehend, appreciate and value child art.

The symbolism in Indian art of the past was mostly based on either a philosophical or a tantrik<sup>5</sup> approach to life. The symbolism of child art does not have a basis in any of these elements; in fact the child creates the symbols spontaneously. They are the result of the child's encounter with the world outside and an effort to create a language to express the experiences and emotions evoked in his mind. To understand these symbols one does not require to seek their meaning in any tradition. If parents and teachers understand the mind of the child, they will have no need to make a special effort to appreciate the aesthetics of child art and grasp its message.

The child's symbols are not necessarily consistent in shape or meaning all the time. But they are, roughly speaking, similar in nature among all children. This is so on account of the universal character of the child's mind and its capacity. This universality makes the symbolism of the child a kind of basic language. Adults who are not familiar with child art initially have to make some effort to translate it in their own way to be able to understand it well enough to enjoy its meaning and beauty. As far as teachers are concerned they have to make themselves fully acquainted with the child's mental processes through which these symbols are created. To put it differently, to be a good teacher, one should know and understand the child well.

Creation of symbols is a social phenomenon. To be able to communicate one's feelings or experiences to others, it is necessary to use some medium, whether it be the language of words, gestures, visual forms or

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4. Herbert Read: *Education Through Art*, p. 129-130

5. Tantrik, A kind of worship of energy. Ritualistic forms of worship of the Goddess energy

something similar. After all, words are symbols created by some kind of common consent. For instance, "pen" denotes a tool for writing. It cannot be anything else, unless a new connotation is attached to the word "pen". Another language- that may or may not use words is music, which is a bit more subtle than the language of words. Sign language resorts basically to the language of words, but in the form of gestures. *Mudras*<sup>6</sup>, used in classical Indian dance forms, such as Bharatanatyam, Kathakali and Kuchipudi, represent various forms of objects, emotions and movements. One must have a fairly good knowledge and familiarity with the languages of mudras to have the capacity to understand and enjoy the particular dance form. Each *mudra* has its unique meaning associated with traditional and/or mythological experiences, hence all the more reason to know the language well.

The language of painting made up of lines, colour and planes is related to the mental image. This image can be represented in two ways. One aims at creating a likeness with the object, visually as correct as possible. The other can be suggestive, impressionistic, symbolic, abstract, decorative, ornamental and/or without any emotional content. Representational paintings need not always be realistic. Indian painting was more suggestive with a high degree of abstraction. Toward the latter part of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, European art shrugged off much of its realism and became impressionistic and symbolic. For a period during the present century the graphic artists tended to give much importance to abstraction. A major difference is that language of symbolism in the past was more or less universal in a particular society while today it is more individualistic. Similarly, the symbolism of child art is individualistic too.

As has already been stated, the symbols children create have very little to do with their visual experience. Whatever they see establish an association in their mind and creates forms which are symbolic. They are not memory images either. It is imagery with subjective realism, and it is concrete.

#### ***Means of Self-fulfilment***

Once initiated into the activity of drawing and painting, children find in it a great satisfaction. Art activities by themselves give a sense of elation, but the other element, i.e. communication, provides the child the satisfaction of conveying to others the messages that no other means can. The child's primary need is for communication and not making patterns or pictures. This does not imply that its artistic contents are a minor portion of the child's interests. The reality is that art activity is an integral part of the child's nature, and the urge to communicate provides an incentive to that activity. Although the child does not think in terms of making an artistic creation, due to his inherent sense of balance and rhythm, the painting that he makes does become an artistic creation. The more the child remains uninfluenced by adult standards, the more balance and rhythmic expression there will be in his work. Therefore, when artistic creativity becomes the medium of communication the child has to create more symbolism and suggestive language.

At that stage of childhood, as there is no logical element in thinking, and experiences are predominantly individualistic, the child does not relate to the outside world on an objective level. These experiences are constantly transformed into reflections of the child's imagery. The child, in order to express them, creates his own symbolism: Along with growing up, the logical element in the child's mind goes on becoming more and more abstract, and with that his symbolism gradually fades away.

#### ***Progress of Symbols***

A study of the symbols created during the earlier stages of childhood shows that the eyes do not play as important a role as the child's imagination does. Almost as a rule, after the preliminary stages of scribbling, children start with the human figure. Whatever they draw satisfies them totally, because it is the correct image of the symbol created in their minds. Children do not judge the visual correctness of their drawings, mainly because their perceptions are different from those of adults, and also because they

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6. *Mudra*, posture of hands and body in Indian dancing

have not yet reached the stage in their development when they start looking at the world outside objectively.

Suppose they had the faculty of comparing the differences in their drawings and the reality outside, would they not have realized that they had failed to draw correctly? Would not such discouragement have resulted in their giving up the activity, naturally, because they didn't have the skills required to make correct drawings? My belief is that with children it is an inbuilt dynamic that protects them from getting discouraged by prematurely becoming aware of the visual realities of the outside world.

At first, say between the age of three and four, these symbols are simple, as simple as the child's thinking and observation; but gradually they become comparatively complex. This is due to the increase in the capacity for *seeing, experiencing and thinking* more minutely and in depth. Without looking at their own conceptual character, they start adding more details in their drawings. For example, the human face which, at the beginning, was only a circular form with two smaller circles inside it as eyes is to with another circle for the mouth and a vertical line for the nose. This process continues until the human figure has hair, ears, hands and legs etc. The important thing to note is that despite all these details these forms remain symbols or, say, a conglomeration of symbols.

Although we associate certain ages with these developments, which may be correct for the purpose of analysis, it will be wiser not to make it a rigid set of rules, specially because children often differ in the pace and character of growth and the types they belong to. My own experience has convinced me about the relevance of such an approach. A girl starting to make pictures will first fill up the space with colour. It is interesting to note that the child artist fills up a space with a colour which he feels to be the centre of attraction for him. For instance, if the shirt a person is wearing in the picture is blue, and that is the centre of interest for the artist, the shirt alone will be filled with that colour, other areas in the picture may remain only in outlines. Sometimes the artist may put some minor colour in a few other places too (*illus. no. 31*).

Another important observation to be made is the arrangement of forms (composition) in the picture. At the beginning when the symbols were simple the pictures were also simple and with only a few symbols—one or two. I shall discuss the point regarding children's sense of space later. Here I shall deal with only a few points related to the question of space in the drawings made by children.

It has been observed that the sense of composition in children's drawings is of a unique kind. In the early stages, they do not generally consider the whole space on the paper to be the painting area. It is likely that a child will draw a picture on a sheet of paper and when asked to do draw more, he or she might make it on the same sheet, even though the second picture may not have any relevance or relationship with the first one. There may be several pictures on the same sheet without any link between the various symbols or subject matter. During this stage of children's art work the sense of composition one looks for in a painting has not yet developed. In other words they have not yet evolved a notion of space, nor have they grasped the correlation between the symbols, ideas and subjects.

The concept that it is space, not a piece of paper, has yet to take shape in the child's mind. When children see adults writing on paper they notice that the writing process starts from the left-hand top corner, hence, some of them start drawing their pictures in the same manner—from left to right (*illus.no. 37*). This is another indication of the fact that it takes some time for children to start having a feeling for space. Another fact to take note of, is that art experiences themselves help the child to develop that sense. There is no doubt that art experiences are very important for children to conceptualize space as such.

Gradually the child discovers links between symbols and ties them up with ideas. Once the child begins drawing on this basis his pictures start taking different forms. Each symbol now has a relevance to the picture as a whole. They have some kind of association with each other (*illus. no. 32*). Now the background too gets colours.

If there is a figure in the pictures it will no longer be on a sheet of paper. It will be on the ground, which will have some colour associated with the kind of ground the figure is standing on—green grass, floor or some other specific surface. If asked to name an item from the picture, the child will often have a concrete reply. There is also some unity of ideas and manifestation of the inherent sense of space, which has not yet received a chance for expression (*illus. nos. 7, 8, 32, 33, 35, 39*).

### **Sense of Space**

My everyday observation convinced me that children have a good sense of space related to the composition of the picture. Dozens of pictures made by our school children every week were obvious proofs of this observation. In other words, most of the pictures were with good composition and had a sound sense of space. But sometimes I thought that this may be true because of the unusual experience our children were having of drawing and painting activities. I had maintained files of their work done over some years. I went through them several times to study in detail the aspect of children's sense of space, composition and colour. Every time I did that I was reassured of my conviction. However, my own conviction was not enough to convince the educational experts, who did not give much thought to the new discovery that children are also artists.

After a good deal of thinking, I decided to find out whether this theory had any scientific basis. The first thing I decided was to conduct some experiments with children to do who had not yet gained much experience of drawing and painting. My second consideration was that these experiments should not be conducted with a selected group of children. It was important that we took all the children of a class and not only a few of them. At the same time, it was necessary to have the full cooperation of the class teachers concerned. We decided to work with a group of children of the nursery section of the school situated in the Sevagram village and the first two groups of children of the Ashram school. The average age of the first group was six, the second was seven and the third was eight years.

### **First Experiment**

We took sheets of paper of the same size for every child and divided the area of each with two colours, making several triangular shapes, (*illus nos. 54 & 55*). The three groups, each with an average of fifteen children, were asked to paint pictures on these sheets. Despite the explanation made at the very beginning that they were to paint their picture on the pattern side of the sheet, twenty percent of the children asked if they could paint on the blank side of the paper.

There may be two reasons behind the question by these children. The first likely reason was probably the fact that "there was already a picture on one side and so why make another on it?" After all, these sheets had some nice patterns on them, "so why spoil them?" To me even this questioning by children indicated that they do have good aesthetic sense and a sense of pattern.

What I thought could be the second reason was a bit more sophisticated. The coloured shapes already drawn were in all likelihood considered a hindrance for the execution of their ideas and free-will in making their paintings in the way they liked. These patterns were like rocks and fallen trees lying on the road on which they were to walk. The conclusion I came to at this stage of the experiment was that children do have, though not consciously, a schematic design for the painting they plan to make. When they paint they do not put colours in a haphazard manner. They follow their pattern, which has its own proportions and composition. It is these dynamics that could have made them seek permission to draw their pictures on the blank side of the sheets. Let us see what they did with the "patterned sheets of paper".

During the course of the experiment, we also maintained the normal atmosphere of our art classes. It was observed, in all the three groups, that all except two or three children used the colours and brushes without any inhibition. It seemed that all of them had an obvious question in their mind to be answered before putting any touch of colour on the paper. "Do I ignore the already existing pattern on the sheet supplied for the purpose and paint my picture as if it was blank, or use these patches for painting my picture?"

In the case of the first option, there was a special situation that had to be resolved in the course of painting the picture. It was probably not a big problem to ignore the already existing shapes and outlines, but ignoring the colours could be a problem. Can you or would you like to put red colour on the red patch! In other words, the artist could not ignore the "pattern", shapes and colours totally; some adjustments had to be made to be able to execute one's own design (*illus. no. 54*).

In the second situation the artist had to make the plan for his picture taking into consideration the angular shapes and colours at the same time. In fact the picture had to be conceived on a totally new basis. The angular shapes could either be used as they were, or changed or modified by the artist to execute his own design. The angular shapes being fairly well spread over the sheet, the artist could use each of them to make an independent picture, implying that the picture had to be in harmony with its form and colour, i.e. requiring from the artist a good sense of space (*illus. no. 55*).

#### Results

Total number of pictures painted: 46

Pictures ignoring the background of angular shapes: 3

Pictures using the shapes: 35

Others: 8

Some of the children painted the angular shapes with a variety of symbols; some left a few of the shapes untouched. The majority of the pictures showed a good sense for space management. The three children who ignored the shapes showed some lack of colour sense. In reply to my query to the classteacher, I was told that those three children were somewhat slow intellectually and backward in other activities also.

One child used red colour on the red surface, but when he saw that it was not visible, he used the same colour but very thickly, making it look like embossed marks. Evidently, his red symbol could not have been of any colour other than red. And the background for it also had to be red.

#### ***Second Experiment***

Similar to the first experiment, I prepared a sheet of paper for each child. All the sheets were similar and had two lines drawn with pencil. While drawing these lines, although I had the sky, hills and a foreground in my mind, the children were told: "These lines were not meant to represent any particular object. You have to draw a tree—only one tree—wherever you feel like doing so on the side of the paper which had two lines drawn on them. Do not draw on the blank side of the paper. A tree-only one should be drawn with a pencil. You can draw the tree wherever and in whichever way you wish, horizontally or vertically. Your drawing should be completed in three minutes only. Examine the paper carefully before starting to work on it."

Results : Number of drawings made: 35

Most of the pictures were completed nearly within the prescribed period of time. In each of the three groups, there were two or three who were slow by temperament. Some of the children were late in completing their drawings, specially because they started enjoying drawing their tree in detail! The proportion of children who drew their trees considering the two lines to represent hills was forty-five per cent. The number of children who placed their tree in between the "two hills" in the same way as a trained artist would, was eleven.

This experiment was relatively simple, firstly because the division made on the paper by the two lines was well balanced, secondly, children were to draw only one tree. However, there was one basic point important for judging their sense of space. If the tree was drawn in a wrong place the balance created by the two lines would be lost. Once lost it could not have been corrected, mainly because there was no possibility of drawing anything else which could have mended the composition of the picture. Quite a few children felt this difficulty rather strongly. During the course of the drawing time, nearly ten of them tried to plead cleverly for permission to draw "something else" also. I noticed that they were not happy at the loss of the already existing balance in the picture. They did not feel satisfied with their drawings.

One child did not touch either of the drawn lines. He made a large tree in one of the three spaces created by the two lines. He did not take these lines to be representing anything in particular, e.g. hills or sky. There were three divisions on the paper and he must have had in mind three different items for the three spaces. But the restriction made him use only one division, perhaps leaving the other two spaces "incomplete". The point to notice here is that the tree he made in that space was undoubtedly very well placed - showing the artist's good sense of space, (*illus. no. 53*).

#### ***Yet Another Experiment***

I conducted yet another experiment a little later. It was similar to the second one, but instead of the two lines drawn with pencil there were clear indications of two hills, sky and the foreground. Results of this experiment were also indicative of the good sense of space the children of that age had (*illus. no. 52*). Interestingly enough, in this experiment one child could not resist the temptation of painting another tree.

All the three experiments showed that children's sense of composition and space is by nature generally balanced.

The above experience and observation raised a question: What could be the reason for ten to fifteen per cent children being found to be poor in this respect? Although this is not the subject for our present discussion, to understand child art a little better it might help if we went into it briefly. It would be psychologically unsound to conclude that these children were born with that deficiency. True, there are cases in which for reasons of health or mishaps during conception or birth, some of these qualities do get lost or stunted. The occurrence, though, of such cases among children is generally much lower than ten per cent.

The more important reason for such deficiencies in a child lies in social and family factors and, to some extent, the child's own circumstances. The simplest factor known to everyone is malnutrition, which affects not only physical growth but also mental development. There are many other reasons behind these kinds of deficiencies. It is not our purpose to go into the details of this phenomenon.

The other side of the picture is the effect of affluence, which, in addition to other effects, takes the child away from nature. Except in a few cases, it shifts the growth of the child from his or her natural course to an artificial and materialistic way of life. It would be a truism to say that the psychology and approach to life of parents and/or guardians has a long lasting impact on children, particularly as manifested during the earlier stages of their lives.

From the observations made and conclusions drawn from the experiments described above it should be obvious that improvement in the way of life and education, including that of the parents, should facilitate the growth of the natural qualities of children. I must make what I think is, an important point at this juncture. My work was with children who were receiving their education through meaningful work and creativity. They were not the children of government primary schools, nor were they from schools specially created for the rich. There is a tremendous difference between them and those being educated according to the principles worked out by educators like Tagore and Gandhi, such as: *Only that education can be complete, which nurtures the mind and the body in an integrated manner, and which is based on meaningful work and creativity*. The children who were part of the three experiments were very young and mostly from a rural milieu, facts which, by the way, went in favour of the approach adopted by us in this work. Most of these children, on an average, already had one or two years of experience at the Sevagram school. In other words they had not been spoilt by the prevalent book-centred education.

Book-centred education aims mostly at developing memory and, at the most, intellect. It does not give even a minimum of consideration to the growth of other faculties, e.g. practical skills, creativity and social awareness. That kind of education does not encourage the formation of those images in the child's mind, which inspire and stimulate the potential of imaginative living. Our present discussion being directed to art education, we are considering only the aspects mainly related to drawing, painting and closely related

subjects. Nonetheless, the perspective presented here is equally important for other arts based on visual experiences. I have already stated that the basis of our perspective is the approach to art in which there is no hierarchic division among "the sixty-four arts". Such a division—fine arts and applied arts—is artificial and socially harmful.

Whatever children do to make useful things is art work. It essentially stimulates their creativity and imagination. If the major inspiration behind the work children do becomes commercially motivated instead of being creative, they will not have the experiences required for a holistic personality development.

The question that comes to mind is: What would have been the results of such an experiment if they had been conducted on children of the ordinary primary schools? It so happened that I was never motivated to conduct any such experiment. Having experienced the atmosphere of municipal schools in India, I do think that, if conducted, such experiments could have given different results. In those schools, children learn to use paper and pencil in an entirely different manner. They are not encouraged to use their imagination and judgment. In any case, I can only say hypothetically, that whatever would be the results of such an experiment, they would undoubtedly give a strong indication towards the need to change the present educational system.

Another question is: What about those children who have never had the chance to attend a school? Again, as I have had no chance to experiment such children it will be erroneous for me to come to any conclusion. But I do have a fair amount of experience with children, who have never gone to any school or who have become dropouts. Such children often develop a kind of activity-oriented life and a life that is spent most of the time under the open sky and in hardship. In other words, these children, by the sheer necessity of circumstances, have to be more free of inhibitions and of the negative impact of the bookish education given in schools. They may not be learning arithmetic tables or lessons in grammar, but their experiences of the kind of life they lead give them a sense of reality, freedom and direct contact with nature and social conditions. They learn to look at life directly and not through a screen of bookish knowledge. Unfortunately, they are also forced by their circumstances, created by social and economic conditions, to learn many anti-social habits and attitudes.

While writing the above, I am thinking of those children, who have not yet had any contact with an urban atmosphere and its artificialities and those of the rural areas and/or city slums, who, either on account of the work they have to do for their families or some other reason to roam around aimlessly for some reason or other in cities, and have to do some kind of work for at least a meal a day. Their power of imagination becomes sharper than that of the children sitting at a desk cramming their lessons with little relevance to their present or future lives.

After a slight but necessary drift away from our main subject psychogenesis of child art, let us now go back to it.

### ***Stage of Realism***

Drawings made by children during the earlier stage were not the results of visual experiences. It would be appropriate to call them logical or schematic. If told that the picture does not look like the object that is supposed to have been represented, the child will try to explain and argue and actually insist that it is the picture of that particular object or person. Once a child of about six years was drawing a picture. He drew two horizontal parallel lines. That was his "road". Then he drew trees on both sides. Some people were walking on the road. They were drawn in the direction of the road. By sheer chance that day his fifteen-year old cousin, who had come to visit the family on his vacation, had accompanied him to the school and was sitting near him. All of a sudden he asked his cousin: "What is this picture?" "Men walking on the road," said the artist cousin. The human figure were drawn in such a way that an "uneducated" person would think they were lying on the road (*illus. no. 3*).

The visitor cousin tried to explain: "Are not the men lying on the road, rather than walking on it? Look, you should have drawn it like this," and he drew a line at right angles to the road. After all, when people walk on the road their position is always perpendicular to the surface of the road. What the boy said was due to his lack of art experience. But the artist cousin knew fully well in his mind that the men were walking in the direction of the road, and so he drew the picture accordingly. This conversation between the two cousins happened spontaneously. Generally, children at that stage do not consciously think in such logical terms. It comes from their inner self and from the intellectual part of their mind. That is the reason why we call it "schematic".

While children's pictures made during the stage of symbolism are schematic, those made at the beginning of the stage of realism start being influenced by their visual experiences. To begin with, there is no sense of the third dimension. Distance is shown by drawing objects one on top of the other (*illus. no. 47*). If there is a tree (even a large one) in the foreground, the sky will be drawn on the space left at the top of the tree or in a top corner and not behind the tree: The concept, *objects in front of you are at a distance from each other in depth*, has not yet entered into his observation process.

The front wall of a house becomes "transparent" or as if it does not exist. The interior of the house becomes visible from outside. The child has not yet started realizing the presence of the wall, *seeing* the wall, because the emphasis is only on the interior (*illus. no. 39*).

Further visual experiences motivate the child to develop the notion of the third dimension. First, the difference in size of the individual items and then their thickness and depth are noticed, ultimately developing into an understanding of the third dimension, perspective. The house which was once complete with only the front wall (*illus. no. 19 & 40*) is now seen with its side walls (*illus. no. 50*). The artist is now beginning to grasp the principle behind the fact that visually the size of the same figure or item becomes smaller when seen from a greater distance.

This stage, generally speaking, goes on until the age of twelve or thirteen. It has a special significance in the mental development of the child. Instead of the predominance of imaginative thinking, the child's thinking process enters into the realm of analytical thinking. New visual experiences make the child observe with greater detail what he wants to express in his pictures. His vision becomes basically visual. This is the last stage of child art. It would be reasonable to say that work done by children during the end of this stage cannot strictly be called child art.

Some specialists consider this (last) phase of the stage of realism, the age of repression. If a child's art activity continues during the age of repression, it will change from child art to adult art. This is the stage in the child's life when certain kinds of energies repress some other kinds of energies. The energies that originally gave the child a special kind of imagery, which enabled him to express his thoughts and feelings through symbols, and the eye to experience the world in his own way, are now repressed by the newly acquired energies which provide him with the skills to look at the outside world of forms objectively, with an analytical vision.

During the earlier years, an important purpose of the child's art activities was communication. It was communicating through images. The child's pictures spoke much more (and more effectively) than his verbal expression. At that time the character and contents of what he wanted to express were different too. Now his verbal skills are so developed that he can communicate through words more effectively than he can with the language of forms, which is being gradually weakened. The ideas and experiences he now wants to communicate are of a different category.

The growth of intellectual capacity is also responsible for the *repression*. At one time, the joy the child unconsciously experienced in his creative activities, in hearing fairy tales, has disappeared. His intellect tells him that those are unrealistic stories and almost entirely irrelevant in practical life. When he starts

comparing his drawings with outside reality he feels disheartened and discouraged. He is no longer a *child*.

There are some children (it will be more appropriate now to call them adolescents) who like to continue with art activities and enjoy them. Their work generally takes the direction of realism, and they like to make their pictures resemble the object as closely possible, (*illus. no. 51*). However, the number of such children is small and they belong to a special psychological type. If their art activities can continue and if they receive the kind of encouragement their type needs, the age of repression will not become a hindrance in their development. It is likely that eventually some of these children will become successful artists.

If art activities continue to remain a part of the school syllabus at that stage too, it is likely that during the stage of realism there would be some children who find themselves unable to continue creating pictures. They would either like to copy or might get interested in making geometrical patterns etc. It only means that they are feeling the effect of the repression.

Before ending this chapter, let me make a brief conclusion. During the earlier years of life, whatever the child sees, hears or experiences is all self-centred. Whatever happens around him, the child thinks it is for his benefit exclusively. Therefore, whatever he does for himself, he is satisfied with it. His values and standards of judgment are entirely his own. But reaching the age of twelve years or so, when he is just entering the world of adults, his own standards do not work any more. The child now realizes that to be able to live in the world of adults he also has to become an adult. He hesitates to do what he did with great joy and satisfaction during his earlier years.

The child starts becoming an extrovert. As his earlier art expression was entirely different from that of the adults, now he tries to imitate their values and standards. But he fails, because the time has not yet arrived and conditions are not yet ripe for the new phase to begin. Unfortunately the style and taste of the society is so distorted and commercialized that the child's earlier art experiences are totally destroyed. The present-day educational system, almost all over the world, gives importance to the inner needs of the individual as a human being with the potential for aesthetic creation.

## Adolescence



*The youth's first affections are the reins by which all his movements can be directed once he is free.<sup>1</sup>*

While discussing the stage of 'introduction to realism', we said that it is the last stage of child art. If it is so then why do we call the stage of early adolescence the fourth stage of children's art expression? Why a separate chapter on it?

The stage of adolescence is also sometimes called the stage of crisis. A majority of art teachers believe that the artistic creativity of children ends forever at adolescence. They think that on account of the awakening of intellectual faculties or for whatever reason it may be, the end of artistic creativity at this stage is inevitable.

My conviction based on personal experience is, however, different. I do not want to put it in the form of some kind of principle, but I do want to make some arguments, based on observations of a large number of children, which would make the picture considerably optimistic. I am convinced that it need not be a stage of "crises". It becomes, almost invariably so, on account of the social-educational climate that has been prevalent for a very long time. There need not be an end to children's artistic creativity at this stage the reasons for adolescence becoming a problematic stage also lie with us, the educators and parents. It is unwise to blame Nature for something we ourselves are responsible for. The main culprit in this case is the educational system that has been built over decades or perhaps centuries.

Jean Jaques Rousseau describes adolescence as follows: "We are born twice over; the first time for existence, the second for life; once as human beings and later as men and women. Upto puberty, children of the two sexes have nothing obvious to distinguish them. They are similar in features, in figure, in complexion, in voice. Girls are children, boys are children. The same name suffices for being so much alike.

"But man is not meant to remain a child for ever. At the time prescribed by nature he passes out of his childhood. As the fretting of the sea precedes the distant storm, this disturbing change is announced by the murmur of nascent passion. A change of mood, frequent tantrums, a constant unease of mind make the child hard to manage. He no longer listens to his master's voice. He is a lion in fever. He mistrusts his guide and is averse to control.

"With the moral signs of changing mood go patent physical changes. His countenance develops and takes on the imprint of a definite character. The soft slight down on his cheeks grows darker and firmer. His voice breaks, or rather, gets lost. He is neither child nor man, and he speaks like neither. His eyes, organs

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau: Emile (Selected and translated by William Body under the title:Emile For Today, William Heinemann Ltd., London, 1960 (reprint), p.104

of the soul, which have hitherto said nothing, find language and expression as they light up with a new fire. He is becoming conscious that they can tell too much and he is learning to lower them and blush. He is disturbed for no reason whatever.<sup>2</sup>

Rousseau considers it as the most important stage in an individual's life. I prefer to call it the "dawn of the life of adulthood". Rousseau says that adolescence is not the stage of hatred or counter-violence. It is the age of charity, compassion and generosity.

Rousseau's thoughts on adolescence make one realize that it is a problematic stage only because we have continued to consider it as such without trying to understand it as a part of the natural course of development of an individual from early childhood to adulthood. He was convinced that if a youth has not lost his simplicity and straight-forwardness by the age of twenty he will be generous and have ample love in his heart till his most mature stage of life. He will be loved by all and he will love all. But then, why does this goodness and simplicity which have been active until the advent of adolescence disappear from one's life?

Rousseau adds: "Teachers complain that the impetuosity of this age makes youth insubordinate, and I see it myself. But is it not their own fault? Do they not realize that once they have allowed this ardour to find expression through the senses, no other way is possible?"<sup>3</sup>

The first sentiment to which a well brought up young man is susceptible is not love but friendship. Rousseau suggests: "You can take advantage of the new sensibility to implant the first seeds of humanity in the heart of the young adolescent. A young man brought up in happy simplicity is drawn by the first movements of nature to the tender kindly passions. His compassionate heart is affected by the sufferings of his fellows. He thrills with delight when he meets a comrade. If the warmth of his blood makes him quick to anger, you see the goodness of his heart a minute later in his effusive repentance. Yes, I maintain without fear of contradiction that a well-born boy, who has preserved his innocence to the age of twenty is the most generous and most lovable of men."<sup>4</sup>

This reminds me of something that an elderly gentleman of nearly Seventy years of age, often said to us, about Sixty years ago, when we were school children: "Today's small boys are really funny. They feel shy of taking off their clothes and they go on asking strange questions even before they are five. In our time, we ran around everywhere with only underwear on. We did not even know what is meant by shyness." What this person implied was that when he was twelve or fifteen, boys of his age were not precocious in the matter of sex or aware of the facts of puberty or adolescence as it is understood today. It is evident from what this elderly friend used to say, that the period of adolescence was a prolonged one, when he was a young man. In Indian society the time of manifestation of the bodily changes that take place at puberty was celebrated as an important event in one's life, both in urban as well as rural areas.

For the Indian educator of the past the problem of puberty or adolescence did not arise. The society had devised rituals to cope with the crisis encountered on account of the curiosity and anxiety faced by children reaching that stage. Parents and teachers did not have to go through hard specialized exercises to deal with them. Interestingly enough, none of the Indian languages have a word for puberty which suggest it to be a problem.

Studies of primitive societies also show that puberty was taken to be a part of the normal course of the individual's growth. According to anthropologists, who have studied many tribal and primitive societies,

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<sup>2</sup> ibid., p. 96-97

<sup>3</sup> ibid., p.104

<sup>4</sup> ibid., p.102

the stage of adolescence in those societies is not problematic by itself. It is not necessarily a period of stress and strain, and if and when it so happens it is due to the changing social conditions.

These changes were considered normal in the daily life of the people. Even today in rural areas, which are far away from cities and large towns and are still comparatively free from the grip of the urban lifestyle, the problem of puberty is not as severe as it is in the cities. This does not imply that people living in those areas are better off than the city people, but the fact remains that they are still free from some of the inhibitions from which city folk suffer.

Such tensions and stresses have become "normal" characteristics and, at the same time, problems, in modern societies. They make a more or less permanent impact on the sensitive mind of the adolescent, which is harmful and proves to be more damaging during the later years of his life. In the mind of the adolescent, the healthy spirit of enquiry turns into restlessness and eagerness into madness. Earlier societies did not suffer so much from these crises because there was less conflict between ideals and their practical application; there was very little difference of approach in the minds of people about lifestyles, and hardly any vagueness in regard to the rules of social behaviour.

It seems that the main reason behind the sense of unity between thought and action was the simplicity and clarity of the social structure and thinking. Life then was simple and clearly defined, whereas modern life has become extremely complex, and difficult. It is hard to reach unity among an endless number of interests and ideologies cherished, entertained and practised by people at different levels. On the other hand, earlier societies functioned around certain focal points, such as religion, rulers, temples, etc.

A concrete example of the way some earlier societies were designed is Shrirangam, a city in South India. Although it is not a typical example, it should illustrate the point made here. It is built around the famous temple after which it derives its name. The city has seven circles around it. At one time it was an extremely organized and disciplined city. The innermost circle had the temple, around which lived the priests, the top brahmin hierarchy, who wielded power. In the second circle resided the upper-caste people, superior in terms of caste and wealth. The other circles had traders and bureaucrats etc. according to their social hierarchical levels. In the outermost circle lived the shudras, the service communities, the so called untouchables.

It was clearly defined as to members of which caste or community could live in which of the circles. The *shudras* could not go anywhere near the inner circles, except for rendering services. Members of some of the groups could not get into the temple for worship; they had to do it in some fixed areas of the temple compound. The untouchables could perform their worship by facing the *shikhara* (towering canopy at the entrance) of the temple, which was visible from everywhere in the city. Every kind of behaviour on the part of each of the communities was clearly defined.

Only a social or political revolt could have stirred up matters. Otherwise life in the city-went on "smoothly". Religious practices had solutions to every problem, individual or communal. The community as a whole looked after the "welfare" of everybody. Even the lowest in the society received at least a meal a day, however scanty. I believe that there were no deaths on account of starvation, and 'people didn't have to go naked for want of clothing of some sort. Everyone had some kind of shelter to live in with their families.

The above description should not give an impression that it was a regimented society and that the city was like a prison. There was freedom of thought, action, work etc. But the religious pattern of life had its own built-in parameters, within which one had to live and behave. It has already been mentioned that some communities still live a life of less tension, specially in remote rural and tribal areas.

The main purpose in giving the example of Shrirangam is to illustrate the fact that a society with a simpler structure has less tensions and internal conflicts, which makes life easier for most people, particularly for

children reaching the stage of adolescence. By no means, is it suggested that the type of society represented by Shrirangam is an ideal one for today and is worth striving for. Moreover, it would be impossible to achieve it in the present situation. Modern life has become complex and confused with a crowd of ideologies (or non-ideologies for that matter) and options to choose from. Ever increasing amount of information—social, political, scientific—to make ourselves "well informed", creates confusion in the minds of people, who want to make their own choices. There are so many power centres to pull human beings, by fear and force, persuasion and enticement in all sorts of directions; attractions of all kinds to make their paths more and more confused.

In a way, it is a healthy stage in human history, a stage that compels us to think about what is desirable and what should be rejected, with the aim of building a society that provides freedom to the individual as well as to communities to evolve their own lifestyle and at the same time develop the sense of care and equality for everyone.

Unfortunately, today, human society is passing through a serious crisis in its value system. The pursuit for knowledge, which has inspired human beings to reach the highest levels of humanity and wisdom, has shifted its emphasis to greed for wealth, power, status and war mongering—the skills to destroy the world and kill masses of innocent people. The artist, who was once considered a yogi in India, has given up practising his yoga and does everything else that can give him fame and wealth. There is hardly any aspect of human life that has been spared such ugly trends which have become the background note of the music of modern life.

To put the arguments graphically, I compare the older society with a circle, around whose centre many circles are drawn or/and in which straight lines are drawn from the circumference to the centre. These lines do not clash with each other nor do the circles do so. There are no complications of any kind. Its dynamics are simple and by the virtue of its structural movements there are fewer chances of any conflict arising.

On the other hand, modern society is like an atom which has a nucleus around which many electrons orbit with great speed. All its movements are governed by the nucleus. If the nucleus ceases to control the movements of the electrons going round it with their own paths within the body of the atom, it will not only be destroyed but also cause destruction to the surroundings. The atom bomb is built on a similar principle.

Although modern society has all the characteristics of the atom, its nucleus has either not yet been created, or, what is more likely, it has lost most of its controls. After all, the earlier society too had a nucleus! The question is: Why can't modern society transform itself into one suited for the changing situations, with the same character as that of the nucleus of the atom? Although it is not my task to find the answer to this question, the effort, nonetheless, is to explore how the human society can rediscover its bearings and build an outlook which would govern our movements and behaviour in a socially more meaningful manner.

Fortunately, the basic unit of human society is the individual, who has something called conscience, which tries to keep an eye on everything that he or she does. Although today human conscience seems to have become blunt, it has not yet been totally destroyed. If rejuvenated it can redeem man's behaviour and aspirations from the stage of restlessness, mad race and distrust, that he has got into due to many factors typical of the modern industrial society.

It is encouraging that some social scientists have become conscious about the dislocation of human relationships, including our relationship with nature. They have also become aware of the forces that can bring about coordination and conciliation between the various trends, options and aims among different interests in society. The major problem before them is to discover and activate physical and non-physical forces which can act in human society in the way the nucleus of the atom does in keeping the balance and harmony in the movements of the various electrons constantly orbiting around it. It is a part of the

universal law of dynamics according to which, a centre of gravity/ attraction is needed to initiate and regulate all the movements of every object. This law also applies to the organization and regulation of human society. What kind of centres are these which need to be discovered? This is the most crucial and challenging question that has to be faced by the educational world.

It has already been stated that the earlier social pattern, which generally speaking had only one coordinating centre, cannot be revived, nor is desirable at this stage of human development. The only hope lies in restructuring society on the basis that can bring out the best and the most creative potential of the individual as well as the society in which he or she lives. In other words, to build a caring and creative social structure.

A question that has to be answered at this stage is: Need art education be given the same importance during the child's adolescent period as it was in his earlier years? If art activities become redundant for the post primary education, should they not be taken out of the curriculum altogether? It is correct to say that child art ceases to be child art sometime at the beginning of adolescence. The art that is produced afterwards can no longer be called child art: it becomes adult art in spirit as well as in form.

#### ***Child Art and Adult Art***

Franz Cizek once said: "People make a great mistake in thinking of Child Art merely as a step to Adult Art. It is a thing in itself, quite shut off and isolated, following its own laws and not the laws of the grown-up people. Once its blossoming time is over, it will never come again. The crisis in a child's life usually comes at about 14—this is the time of the awakening intellect. A child then often becomes so critical of his own work that he is completely paralysed and unable to continue creative work. Until then, he has worked entirely out of feeling, unselfconsciously, spontaneously, pressed on by some urge within him. Of course, there is no reason why the intellect should be a hindrance to creation; it ought to be a help..."<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, we cannot think of extending the period of child art as such beyond its natural course. However, it should not mean that the experiences that made the child's life joyful and about which the claim has been that they help in developing the personality of the individual fully, have gone waste. The ground that those experiences have prepared during the early years of an individual has its own importance. Franz Cizec himself said: "The principal aim of Child Art is that the creative power develops and influences right through life."<sup>6</sup>

If the principles behind art activities have been followed properly during the early years and the child has been happy and creative during that period, there is no reason why it should not have made a lasting impact on his personality. Yet, it must be emphasized that its influence on the personality can be really lasting and fully effective only if creative activities are continued during adolescence and after. Actually, the awakening of the intellect should be an asset in combating the adolescent's hesitation or defeatist inclination to continue art activities rather than a hindrance. It is not that the adolescent stops these activities for lack of interest. It is the lack of proper guidance and support that makes him feel frustrated and give up. More importantly, the low social status granted to artistic activities and the overemphasis put on intellectual skills pushes the child away from them.

To ensure the continuity of art activities and also to make sure that art plays its essential role as the basis of education, the form and character and the methods of dealing with them will have to be radically changed. Their goals will also be different. As long as it remained child art, its activities were spontaneous and almost totally free. During adolescence and adulthood they have to be treated differently. Instead of remaining only playful creativity the activity has also take the form of *sadhana*.

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5. Franz Cizec: quoted by Wilhelm Viola, *Child Art*, University of London Ltd., Bickley, 1945, p.63  
6. ibid., p.60

It is also generally believed that once the child develops some command over the spoken language, it becomes the sole or at least the major medium of communication for him. On account of the mistaken attitude of educational leaders, it has become a common belief that once the child has learnt to communicate through the newly acquired skill, i.e. of spoken language, the need for art activities for self-expression, has "already come to an end". Moreover, it is said, "as there is not an important place for art activities in the educational system, there is no point in giving any consideration to it in further education." The fact, though, is that every medium created by human society for self-expression and communication has its own role to play and field to cover. Not one of them can be replaced by another. Each one of them is meant to express a different kind and category of feelings and ideas. The kind of thoughts and forms expressed by spoken or written language, cannot be expressed in painting or sculpture in the same way. Prose and poetry (even these two between them are meant to express different kinds of feeling and experiences) cannot communicate the world of visual forms as painting, sculpture, or for that matter other graphic art, can. Feelings, emotions and movements expressed by dancing cannot be communicated by the arts that involve sound and words, e.g. music. Of course, combinations of various art forms and techniques can and do produce most enriching experiences. But that is a case for giving equal importance to all the art forms and means of communication.

It boils down to the fact that the spoken language as a medium of self-expression is an additional tool for the child as a social human being who has the need and the will to communicate more fully with fellow human beings. Meaning thereby that would all the energy in developing the spoken and written language to replace the language of forms, e.g. graphic arts, as a means of self-expression and communication, should be given up at the first indication of the fading away of art activities at the dawn of adulthood. It is not correct to think that the child himself gives up taking interest in art activities. The truth is that the child has no other option, because these activities are intentionally left out by the educational authorities as unimportant in the school programme.

Much before experts started understanding the significance of child art, Friedrich Froebel wrote in his book *The Education of Man*: "The perception and representation of linear relations open to the child on the threshold of boyhood a new world in various directions. Not only can he represent the outer world in reduced measure, and thus comprehend it more easily with his eyes; not only can he reproduce outwardly what lives in mind as a reminiscence or new association, but the knowledge of a wholly new world, the world of forces, has its tenderest rootlets right here..."

"The ball that is rolling or has been rolled, the stone that has been thrown and falls, the water that was dammed and conducted into many branching ditches—all these have taught the child that the effect of a force, in its individual manifestations, is always in the direction of a line. "<sup>9</sup>

Froebel further wrote: "The word and the drawing are again clearly opposed in their nature; for the drawing is dead, while the world lives. The drawing is visible, as the word is audible. The word and the drawing, therefore, belong together inseparably, as light and shadow, night and day, soul and body do. The faculty of drawing is, therefore, as much innate in the child, in man, as is the faculty of speech, and demands its development and cultivation as imperatively as the latter; experience shows this clearly in the child's love for drawing, in the child's instinctive desire for drawing."<sup>10</sup>

Present-day educational systems give all their attention to the development of the intellectual faculties. It cannot be denied that today the intellectuals are considered superior to others in society. Naturally, therefore, education everywhere aims at the growth of the intellect of students at every stage of their development. School education starts becoming intellect-oriented as soon as children begin learning to read and write. In fact teaching, students to read and write has become the sole objective of school education, right from its beginning stages. Its only aim is to thrust knowledge into the heads of children. In

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7. Friedrich Froebel: *Education of Man*, D. Appleton & Co., London, 1911, p.76  
8. ibid., p.79

in the present context, knowledge implies gathering information and retaining it in one's head. Language is the major medium for gathering and preserving knowledge in books. Thus book oriented education has gained the most prestigious position in society. Those who are more "knowledgeable", in other words, who have good memory and access to information, are given the highest places in society and government offices.

The result is that the largest section of the population, comprising farmers, manual workers, technicians and creators of useful and beautiful things, is considered inferior. They do not enjoy even a fraction of the respect that the intellectuals do. So much so that the higher strata of society considers even the artists, not to talk about the crafts-people, as only entertainers; certainly not equals.

Unfortunately, this attitude of the society has created an inferiority complex among the "disrespected" or "less respected" sections of the population. The farmer does not any more want his son to take to farming and the craftsman does not wish that his son might carry on the family profession. They want to see their sons sit at desks in offices as clerks, or even peons, rather than dirty their hands with mud. The young, too, would rather pull rickshaws in cities and towns in the so-called Third World countries. They do not realize that the education imparted in schools creates distorted personalities. It is greatly responsible for greed and tension and the retrace, eventually ending up in conflict and violence in society.

The more man runs after the knowledge gained by only the physical sciences, the more he cuts himself off from the knowledge needed for making human beings mature men and women, healthy people predisposed to genuine peaceful living. The educational world, whose responsibility it is to strive for preparing the individual for living a peaceful and creative life, does not even mention this aspect of knowledge, in fact it considers it useless for development. The "educated" make fun of this approach and call it "backward and out of place in this era of nuclear science". They consider scientific knowledge the highest achievement of mankind. Therefore, they want it to have the highest place in education.

The result is that education in schools, colleges and universities, everywhere kindles only intellectual virtues and ignores most of the other elements of human nature. With the pursuit of only the intellectual growth of the personality, knowingly or unknowingly, the emotional side of our being gets ignored and distorted. No doubt, with this approach, man's logical faculties are enhanced. Logical faculties are that part of our psychic apparatus, called ego, which represents reason.

I like to give the old fashioned simile of the human mind being like an iceberg of which only one-tenth remains outside and nine-tenths is submerged under water. The one-tenth is the conscious and the nine-tenths the unconscious mind. (I am leaving out the subconscious for the sake of brevity.) The present-day educational system caters to the needs of the conscious and ignores the unconscious, the id, which contains the passions and is the source of all energy. "The id contains everything that is present at birth, that is fixed in the constitution, above all, therefore, the instincts, which originate from the somatic organization and which find a first psychical expression (in the id) in forms unknown to us, wrote" Sigmund Freud (1940). "The id is unorganized; the ego confirms to the secondary processes, which are analytical and respect the principles of contradiction and categories of space and time. "<sup>9</sup>

Under the impact of modern education and upbringing the id, the unconscious, not only remains un-lived, but is also repressed and regressed. Education slows down and distorts the process by which precepts are converted into images forming part of our mental furniture and structure. In *Education for Peace*, Herbert Read writes: "The whole ideal of education... is intellectual. It tends to become even narrower than that: the ideal is scientific. Even in subjects which used to be described as 'liberal' philosophy, literature and history—the spirit of teaching becomes increasingly 'objective' of 'positive' and all questions of 'value' are rigidly excluded..."<sup>10</sup>

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9. Charles Rycroft: *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Reference Books, London, 1972

10. Herbert Read: *Education For Peace*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1950, p.40-41

The growing crisis today is related to values and the unfulfilled life of the majority of the people. It makes people self-centred and anti-social. This distortion is due to the ignoring of the needs of the unconscious, the id, with its dynamism governing most of our behaviour. The way to allow the 'unconscious' to live is to create a link between the ego and the id. It is the responsibility of education to establish this link.

"Freud suggests that some of the repressed forces in the id, which as a whole, he characterizes as 'a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement', are allowed, in a transformed state, to escape through the ego. It is the process known as *sublimation*, and the source, according to Freud, of all our moral, religious and aesthetic ideals. Sublimation is the transformation of selfish, instinctive drives, wishes and desires into socially useful or socially approved thoughts, ideals and activities."<sup>11</sup>

There was a time when such mental processes were built-in elements which governed our normal behaviour. The sublimation process was a product of life based on trust and faith. There was no questioning about the faith that motivated all human behaviour. It required and of the 'undesirable', antisocial, selfish drives and desires on the part of each member of the society. But to expect those conditions to be recreated today would be a day dream. Social and economic conditions are now totally different, so the solutions of the problems also will have to be different.

According to the Indian tradition *yoga shastra* (science of yoga) offers a way to liberate oneself from problems related to greed, undue desires, mental stresses and tensions. Its aim is to create a link between the human soul, which has both the conscious and the unconscious, with the universal soul (complete knowledge). For the human mind to know the *unknown* by concentration/meditation is one of the objects of yoga. The purpose is not to live life *fully*, but to live it with full command by the conscious mind over one's desires and behaviour. It can be an effective corrective to our present mentality, which is overburdened with external pressures and estranged from the true life of spirit by humdrum toil, material greed and sensual excitement.

"*Yoga*, according to Patanjali, is a methodical effort to attain perfection, through the control of the different elements of human nature, physical and psychical. The physical body, the active will and the understanding mind are to be brought under control. Patanjali insists on certain practices, which are intended to cure the body of its restlessness and free it from its impurities. When we secure through these practices increased vitality, prolonged youth and longevity, these are to be employed in the interest of spiritual freedom... The main interest of Patanjali is not metaphysical theorizing, but the practical motive of indicating how salvation can be attained by disciplined activity."<sup>12</sup>

To reach that stage in life was the highest ideal according to the Vedic philosophy. Faith and devotion help in suppressing the desires and yoga gives the will power and the technique to have full control over our behaviour and the way of life. I have not the moral right to suggest that *yoga shastra* should form the basis of the reconstruction of our educational philosophy and practice. We have deviated so much from that kind of thinking that, even though it is desirable, it is impossible for me to visualize that our educational planning could be done on that basis at this point in time of human development.

However, I am sure there are people who try to live according to the principles of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* (treatise on *yoga*) There is a great variety in human nature. Despite changes that take place over long periods and despite the highest levels of the growth of modernism, there are and there will always be, people who follow the old tested paths. Yoga has some kind of universality about it. And I have no doubt

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11. Herbert Read: *Education Through Art*, Faber and Faber, London, 1954, p. 178

12. Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy*, Blackie & Son Publishers, (Reprint 1977), George Allen & Unwin, London, Vol.2, p.338

that people who choose such a path do find it attractive, helpful and worth the hardships involved in following them. But their numbers are very limited.

#### ***Art: The Basis of Education***

There is another path, a path that I consider to be for everybody; the path of art and creativity. There is nothing new about it. It had been realized in India centuries ago. Plato also wrote about it. It does not demand repression of feelings or desires. Its dynamics offer guidance to our feelings and wishes through creativity, and the power to submit our desires to the world of goodness and beauty. To put it briefly I shall paraphrase the first line of a song by Rabindranath Tagore: *When I see the universe through music (song), it is only then that I know it, I understand it'. That is the way of art and creativity.*

While discussing Indian philosophy Ananda K. Coomaraswamy wrote in *The Dance of Shiva*: "...later Hindu view... treats the practice of art as a form of *yoga*, and identifies aesthetic emotion with that felt when the self perceives the Self..."<sup>13</sup> Coomaraswamy quotes from *VisuddhiMarga*: "Living beings, on account of their love and devotion to the sensations excited by forms and the other objects of sense, give honour to painters, musicians, perfumers, cooks, elixir-prescribing physicians, and other like persons, who furnish us with objects of sense."<sup>14</sup>

Relating to the identity between art and yoga Coomaraswamy says: "...the important part once played in Indian thought by the concept of Art as Yoga... It will be remembered that the purpose of Yoga is mental concentration, carried so far as the overlooking of all distinctions between the subject and the object of contemplation; a means of achieving harmony or unity of consciousness."<sup>15</sup>

If art is accepted as *yoga*, as Ananda K. Coomaraswamy suggests, there is no reason why it should not be helpful in planning the whole system of education with the objective of building healthy and happy personalities and therefore a healthy and caring society. Art, having played its creative role in the pre-adolescence stage of the individual, should also become an integral part of education of the adolescent. Art has the capacity to help the individual to overcome his restlessness and cure his or her mental problems, as well as make one a socially creative person. With the aid of additional skills such as language, intellectual understanding and analytical power, art, as the basis of education, should become the foundation on which to build a sound educational system—a system that will nurture the spirit of equality, compassion and wisdom, and above all, genuine freedom and beautiful living. The path of art seems to be the only way to provide that potential to education, especially in today's world.

I am not pleading for art education to be given its due place in educational planning. I am saying that *Art should become the very basis of education*. As long as education does not look after the development of the whole personality of the individual as a well fulfilled person and one who is able to identify with the spirit of nature, human life will remain full of tensions, hatred, disunity and violence.

Art has not yet received its due place even in the primary stages of education. Very few schools have art activities in their primary sections, and they are promptly removed from the syllabus as soon as the child is eleven. In other words, art is not considered necessary beyond the very early stage of adolescence. Herbert Read is strongly of the opinion that art must remain an essential part of education at all its stages.

"As we have seen, it is usually assumed that profound change occurs in the average child at about the age of 11, which change involves the desuetude of aesthetic modes of expression. Admittedly, a profound change of a psychological nature does take place at this age. From our point of view it may perhaps best be described as the discovery of logical thought—the mental revolution so vividly described by Bergson, Claparede and Piaget. The child acquires the power of breaking up or dissociating his first unitary

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13. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Shiva*, Sagar Publication, New Delhi, 1968, p.23-24

14. ibid.,p.24

15. ibid.,p.25-26

perceptions, and logical thought begins with this capacity to isolate and compare component details. From this comparative or correlating activity... proceeds the abstract thought or concept, and it must undoubtedly be true that the change thus introduced into the mental processes of the child has profound effect on his modes of expression. But to assume that visual or plastic (imagist) modes of expression are thereby eliminated is to beg the question. They *may* show a tendency to disappear; but it is perhaps this very tendency that our educational Methods should oppose, preserving not only the function of imagination, but even more necessarily the essential unity of perception: not only the continuously vitalizing interchange of mind and the concrete events of the natural world, but also the continuous nourishment of the individual psyche from the deeper levels of the mind.

"If we have no a priori notions of what art should be, if we realize that art is as various as human nature, then it is certain that a mode of aesthetic expression can be retained by every individual beyond the age of 11 and throughout and beyond the adolescent period in general, *if* we are prepared to sacrifice to some extent that exclusive devotion to the learning of logical modes of thought which characterizes our present system of education. The art of the child declines after the age of 11, because it is attacked from every direction, not merely squeezed out of the curriculum, but squeezed out of the mind by the logical activities which we call arithmetic and geometry, physics and chemistry, history and geography, and even literature as it is taught. The price we pay for this distortion of the adolescent mind is mounting up—a civilization of hideous objects and misshapen human beings, of sick minds and unhappy households, of divided societies armed with weapons of mass destruction. We feed these processes of dissolution with our knowledge and science, with our inventions and discoveries, and our education system tries to keep pace with the holocaust; but the creative activities which could heal the mind and make beautiful our environment, unite man with nature and nation with nation. These we dismiss as idle, irrelevant and inane."<sup>16</sup>

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16. Herbert Read, *Education Through Art*, Faber and Faber, London, 1943 (Reprint 1967), p.168-169

## *Adolescence and Creativity*



*Admittedly a profound change of psychological nature does take place at this stage... But to assume that visual or plastic modes of expression are thereby eliminated is to beg the question. They may show a tendency to disappear; but it is perhaps this very tendency that our educational methods should oppose; preserving not only the function of imagination, but even more recently the essential unity of perception...<sup>1</sup>*

While discussing the vast possibilities of artistic expression as an important means of developing the full personality of the child, and exploring the principle that creative activities should be the foundation on which educational programmes should be structured, it is necessary to look into the question: How can the education of adolescents be designed on that principle?

It would be wrong to subscribe to the belief held by many educational experts that with the arrival of adolescence the child's artistic creativity starts disappearing. Educational planning has to be such that it will endeavour to develop the personality of the child in a holistic manner and will not put undue emphasis on the nurturing of only intellectual pursuits. It must not ignore the development of those virtues that help the individual, in making his environment beautiful and healthy.

Art education should continue with the same spirit as it did during the pre-adolescence period; its rhythm should not be disrupted. In other words, it should not make the teacher and the student feel that art education has been shelved or has changed its emphasis and objectives. There should not be a brake or drastic change in art education between childhood and adolescence; the change over has to be smooth, without conflicting attitudes and messages. No doubt, with growing maturity one's values change; values connected with art also change and/or become elaborate. The form art education takes, obviously, will be different and according to the situation its technical aspect will become more complex; new material and techniques will have to be added to it.

The stage of adolescence, as that of childhood, is an inseparable and inevitable part of one's growth to maturity. Although children do seem to change their interests and emphasis towards different subjects and activities, the aim of education should be to treat these changes as an essential part of a fuller development. It is a hard task. Nevertheless, education arid educators have to make sure that the child's feeling of inability to produce and perform in a manner that is expected by the "uneducated" adult world does not discourage, inhibit or prevent them from doing their art work spontaneously. That is the period when they need the greatest support.

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1. Herbert Read: *Education Through Art*, Faber and Faber, London, 1954, p. 168

It is not our purpose here to discuss what the overall system of education should be after adolescence. However, it is essential to look into the issues and problems related to education as a whole and art activities during and adolescence.

There are schools with some provision for art education, but their syllabus for teaching art is generally so one-sided that instead of helping the growth of creativity and the aesthetic sense of children, it either kills or corrupts these elements. Barring a few exceptions, even in good schools, the objectives of art education are geared only to its technical aspects, such as correct perspective drawing for architectural and engineering purposes, which, no doubt, is important. For instance, it helps in improving visual memory, good observation and skills required for gaining dexterity and precision in subjects and professions such as engineering, carpentry, biology, botany, etc.

Art treated in the above mentioned manner is no different from all the other intellect-oriented subjects. Our experience is that art education, which deals with the personality as a whole and aims at developing a fulfilled and aesthetically healthy individual, almost automatically imparts the knowledge and skills required for the above mentioned subjects. In cases where it does not do so, it makes it easier to acquire them with very little extra effort. We have learnt that from the classical ideals of India and from what people like Plato and Tagore have said essential for a civilized and creative society.

There is a question raised about the current practice founded during the colonial period, of having two periods or a double period every week for drawing. Evidently, it does not make any sense in the context of art when it is treated as the basis of education for creative living. It makes sense only if art classes are considered important for their practical use. My own experience is that many children today opt for drawing as an easy subject to pass examinations. It hardly has any element of creativity. Art cannot play its required role in a system based on the present day approach to education and its ideals. I have no doubt that without bringing about basic changes in our education system and its practice, even with the best of intentions the desired results cannot be achieved.

Whatever is taught should aim at enhancing the spirit and skills of creativity. However, there may be pupils who develop an aptitude for some intellectual subjects after reaching a certain stage of their educational growth, which is natural, and depends on their interests —intellectual, creative, etc. The choice, though, would generally have to be made during the last stage of adolescence, more likely after it is over.

Our present concern is not to deal with the issues involved in the question of human types and their needs, but to reiterate the need for deciding on the principle: the medium of education should be such that it will enrich the heart and soul of the individual with the knowledge and sensitivity necessary to become a creative person as well as a creative member of the community. There has to be an integrated approach between the creative activities as the basis of education and the intellectual growth of the individual. To make it clear, I shall mention some activities such as productive handicraft, painting, sculpture, dance, music, literature, etc. Good educational planning should not try to carve out two different paths, one for realizing truth and beauty and the other for intellectual growth and business acumen, something that is invariably happening today, resulting in the total indifference to the first path.

The gist of what has been said above is that the issue is not so much of reforming the programme of education as that of revolutionizing the approach to education in its totality. It is also not a question of putting changed emphasis on various subjects to be taught. It is more of the relationship between the subjects taught and the personality of each child. To put it in some kind of practical form: Each subject taught should either be a creative activity or one that helps in the pursuit of creativity, resulting in the integrated growth of the mind and the body, the hand and the heart.

It is a common notion among many educators that whatever a child does should take the form of play. I would rather reverse the approach and insist that even play, or call it sports, should be treated as creative

activity. They should not be considered activities for only entertainment or exercise for physical improvement. Their greatest contribution to human beings is in giving a social sense, healthy personality and good character. Unfortunately, even sports are rapidly becoming only a source of entertainment, competition and wealth.

The same, though, applies to the idea of introducing handicraft in the school as an "extracurricular activity". The crucial question in this respect that comes to mind is: Why do we think that children need entertainment in the form of sports, or handicraft? Is it because all the other things they do are drudgery, both mental and physical, which need to be compensated by providing "entertainment", relaxation or for that matter, less serious activities? All this is the result of an unintegrated thinking on the part of the experts in the field of education.

Once again, the same argument applies to the notion of dividing art into two separate parts. One in the pursuit of beauty and the other for making useful things. In schools there is a general tendency to have two different categories of art classes. Handicraft such as needle work, carpentry, etc. and fine arts, such as painting and sculpture, music and dance, etc. Unfortunately, this division has affected the perspective of life at all levels. Craft is considered a second-rate subject and only those who are "not talented enough" are given handicrafts; children who are talented can take painting and "fine arts". The reason behind this approach is the stratification of society or is it the other way round, i.e. the division of arts into two levels has also caused the social structure to be ridden with hierarchical stratification!

Children, when still young, do not quite feel the discriminatory character of society, but those entering their adolescence and living in a stratified society, particularly those who belong to the "lower strata", cannot reconcile to the discrimination they face in their day-to-day lives. Unfortunately, schools are gradually becoming factories of discrimination and further stratification. In India, for example, on the one hand there are the Doon schools for the rich, and on the other municipal schools, where children are treated as an unavoidable nuisance. To reinforce this division, educational planning plays a divisive role. The strongest roots of this kind of division are nurtured at pre-adolescence and adolescence stages of the individual.

My contention is that educational planning on the lines suggested and elaborated in this book may come to the rescue of society in the 20th century. Art education of the right kind is the key to a new perspective.

## The Teacher and the Educational Atmosphere



*...teacher must be the humblest and most modest person, who sees one of God's miracles, but not the pupil,<sup>1</sup> in a child.<sup>1</sup>*

Even if the principles of an educational system are sound and solid, they will never yield the right results if they are not applied honestly and in a systematic manner. And that depends more on the teacher than on anyone or anything else. If teachers do not comprehend their task well and have no understanding of childhood, the principles, however profound, will have no meaning. Moreover, the quality of their work does not depend so much on the training they receive in the training colleges, as it does on their personality and the attitude towards children. It has often been experienced that some individuals can be excellent teachers even without being trained in the best training colleges. What then, are, the elements that make a good teacher?

When someone learns something, it is not because that person has been taught, but because the person has learnt it himself or herself. In the case of art, it is all the more so, as art is not something that can really be taught; it comes from within oneself. In the main, there are no principles or formulas which can be crammed. There is no know-how which can be stored in one's memory. Nor can it be taught by any teacher, institution or even an artist.

Indeed, there is no such concept as *teaching* in Indian culture. In a speech delivered to a large gathering of teachers and educationists at an all-India conference, Vinoba Bhave said: "Discovery regarding this word (*teach*) shows the Indian classical mentality. In none of the fourteen languages in which the Indian Constitution has been written the word *teach* exists; but there is a word for *learn*. There is no equivalent of the English verb, to teach in Sanskrit or any of the other Indian languages. In the English language, one is to learn and the other is to *teach*. Both are independent verbs." Vinoba Bhave continues: "It is the egocentricity of the teacher that he thinks that he can teach. As long as we cherish this pride, we will never be able to understand the essence of education."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, we do want to discuss the task of the teacher, and that, too, of the art teacher. According to Shri Aurobindo, the first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. However, Shri Aurobindo describes his concept of a teacher as follows: "The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose..."<sup>3</sup> It is easy to teach, but the task of the teacher, the kind whom we have in mind, is difficult. To illustrate how easy or difficult is the task of teaching, I shall give the example of the mother. There is a type of mother who does not allow her child to go near any danger. If the stove is on, she will not let the child enter the kitchen. I have seen many a mother imprison her child in a cage, called playpen, while working in the kitchen. Having put the child "out of danger", she is no more worried about the child's safety.

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1. Franz Cizek: quoted by Wilhelm Viola in *ChildArt*, University of London Press, 1945, p.44
  2. Acharya Vinoba Bhave from the inaugural talk given at the Kanchipuram Nayee Talim conference.
  3. Shri Aurobindo: *A System of National Education*, Shri Aurobindo Ashram, 1956, p.ll

There is another mother, who does not put the child in a cage or keep him tied up in a corner, but allows him ample freedom of movement. Nonetheless, she keeps a constant eye on the child. She even allows the child to come near the fire but sees that the child does not start playing with it and does not go too near it. She does not stop the child from experiencing the heat coming from the stove, but takes care that the child is not harmed.

The work of the second mother is very difficult, because she is not as free to cook as the first mother. It is not possible for her to forget the child even for a moment. There are two basic factors that govern her perspective. First: she should not keep the child imprisoned even for a short period, and should not prevent him from experiencing freedom. Second: The child should always be open to new experiences, but be protected from every kind of danger. The point is that children should not be prevented from gradually developing an understanding of danger. The child has to learn what is danger and where it is likely to be. In other words, this mother has to be a good teacher to be able to let her child have some experience even of fire in an atmosphere of freedom.

In many respects, the task of the teacher is similar to that of the second type of mother. We do not consider that person to be a good teacher who goes to the class, reads a poem or does some arithmetic and makes the children cram it all by heart. The work he or she does, has nothing to do with the personality of the child. It is routine work and has no relevance to the educational development of children. When such a teacher enters the classroom, children feel that here is someone who has come to burden them. Such a teacher cannot make learning a pleasant experience.

On the other hand, a good teacher is one who is unassuming and whose presence gives a feeling of assurance to the children. They feel that their teacher has a great deal to give to them, and they can go to him or her without any fear or inhibition. Such teachers do not teach, give lectures or preach. Nonetheless, their students get much help from them in the process of learning. I have seen teachers who are careful in making sure that children do not become too conscious about their identity as teachers, and of the contribution they make to the learning process of the children. So much so, if asked what their teacher has taught them, some children may even say: "He/she does not teach us anything!" And yet they might be very attached to him or her, sometimes even healthily dependent.

What is the secret of the success of such a teacher? Firstly, a good teacher makes every effort to create an atmosphere of learning. The atmosphere of learning is the best teacher and it should inspire. Secondly, a good teacher understands the child, knows the real needs of childhood and of each child in the class. A good teacher will treat every child as an individual personality and will respect him or her as such. It is by knowing the child that one learns child psychology and can dwell deep into it. Books can and often help, but they are not absolutely essential. They are useful to those who seek knowledge from their own experience.

The third and perhaps the most important factor is that of the student-teacher relationship. It is a relationship that goes far beyond the formal classroom relationship. It is a relationship of one *chaitan*<sup>4</sup> with another *chaitan*<sup>4</sup> — one who is enlightened with the other who is on the way to enlightenment. There is no technical formality of any kind in this relationship. The teacher and the pupil are two human beings, and their relationship implies a healthy encounter between two individuals.

As we have seen creative activities encourage a holistic growth of the personality of the child and that the processes involved help in developing an attitude for truth. Despite these positive factors related to creative activities it should be said, with emphasis, that creative activities alone are not sufficient for providing the kind of teacher-pupil relationship needed for the inner fulfilment of those concerned. It is a relationship of

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4. *Chaitan*, this Sanskrit word can be translated as enlightened

give and take, and which has nothing to do with selfishness or superficial attachment. It is related to the spirit of togetherness mutual care.

Teacher and pupil relationship concern both sides. The teacher is not the only party that gives all the time; both have to constantly nurture the spirit of exchange. Rabindranath Tagore wrote: "The teacher's heart continues to receive every moment of his life, and that is why he continuously gives himself totally. He finds the proof of his truth and honesty in the process of giving and from the joy he receives from it."<sup>5</sup>

Imparting art experience becomes more successful and lively if the teacher treats the students as artists and not simply as "students". If, on the other hand, he relates with his students as fellow artists, he will find the relationship even more fruitful. It is these dynamics that will eventually create in the pupil the attitudes which will make him an active member of the community. To sum up this point: education will reach its wholeness only if it can ply the dual role of, having a constructive content and the kind of relationship mentioned above.

The relationship of the teacher and the taught is also a ladder between the child and its natural and social environment. The first step of the ladder, related to the social environment, is the parents, specially the mother. The mother-child relationship, however, is emotionally so overwhelming that the growth of objectivity in the child sometimes becomes difficult. Therefore, I believe that drawing a parallel between the mother and the teacher is not educationally sound, for each one's relationship with the child is of a totally different kind. The teacher can more easily establish a relationship which is of creative detachment and objectivity, yet based on friendship and respect between him and the pupil. The bridge between the child and the environment thus constructed with the help of the teacher is a bit similar to that provided by the priest in a temple.

Human beings are twice-born. The first birth takes place from the mother's womb. The second takes place through the process of enlightenment, spiritual training and/or through creative activities. Just as a midwife is needed at the time of the first birth, the midwife at the second birth is the teacher. But let us not ignore the fact that a bad midwife can destroy the life of the newcomer in the world.

The relationship of the child and the teacher can be compared to that of two companions who set out to explore a new land, sharing each other's experiences, helping each other in every kind of situation. It is not quite like the ordinary teacher child relation, because they both learn together. They are two different individuals who learn with and from each other. In the case of art education this kind of relationship is essential, particularly because art activity is a kind of exploratory pursuit which is always a new experience for both, the teacher as well as the student. In all kinds of exploratory work, mutual consultation becomes inevitable.

What are the qualities required in a good teacher? A good teacher has to have a sense of discretion—choosing the right against the wrong, good thought and deed against bad thought and deed, good aesthetic sense, correct social behaviour and sense of service. Unless the teacher has a good sense of selection, the pupils will never be able to know what is right or wrong, desirable or undesirable, social or anti-social, beautiful or ugly, in cheap taste, dignified, or otherwise.

As has already been said, bookish knowledge of child psychology is not sufficient, or even as important as practical experience with children. For a teacher, every child on his own ought to be like a book on psychology. If a teacher of psychology continuously observes children sympathetically, he will gain ample experiences that will help him understand the intricate principles of psychology, and also guide him in his

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5. Rabindranath Tagore: 'Education in the Ashram', in *Shiksha*, (original in Bengali language), Vishwa Bharati Granthalaya, Calcutta, 1950, p.311

work without going into complicated scholastic studies. All the knowledge and experience a teacher requires in order to help children can be gained best by trying to understand the real needs of children.

In a previous chapter we discussed the needs of childhood, particularly in regard to art—drawing and painting. We tried to understand the nature of the child and also the way children receive pure pleasure through these activities. We have also suggested that the first task of the teacher is to build an atmosphere of activity and learning. These two elements, understanding of childhood and creating a sound atmosphere, are mutually connected.

What would be a sound atmosphere in relation to art activities? Everyone sympathetic to children must have observed that as soon as a child completes a picture, he runs to the-teacher and -wants to show him his achievements. If the teacher reacts in a manner of indifference, the child feels disappointed and, in all likelihood, discouraged. I have often seen that in spite of such a response, after a while, the child goes back to the teacher, again to try to get some kind of response. This is his need to get support, to get a pat on the back from someone who he thinks is a well-wisher and a friend. Not looking at the child's picture with some interest and not making a comment shows that this teacher does not understand the child and is not capable of building an atmosphere of encouragement in the class.

Wilhelm Viola describes one of his experiences in his book *Child Art*. "I lately had a wonderful experience. After drawing and painting for an hour, I discussed with a dozen children from three to seven, their pictures; that means we discussed them together. I had finished when six-year-old Susan started sobbing. When I asked her why she cried, she said: 'But you have not criticized my picture.' Needless to say, I had done it, but I did not know that Susan was outside when I discussed and praised her picture." Cizek adds: "Susan was a shy child, but when she did not get 'significance' or thought she had not, she asked for it, and in the presence of a great number of adults..."<sup>6</sup>

Why was Susan so keen of hearing something about her drawing? Simply because she needed recognition, which she thought she had not got. Recognition is a need not only for children; every one of us needs it. Don't grown-up people and the so-called highly educated long for high places and positions in society? The child, however, asks for nothing more than the recognition of its presence and of the work he does.

The old-fashioned teacher will tell off the child if the picture he has made does not look like the object drawn or if it is wrong from his own point of view. If he does not scold the child he will surely criticize the mistakes in the painting. According to teachers like him, the picture will be full of *mistakes*, unless all the rules of perspective, anatomy, etc. have been strictly followed. Such teachers are unable to appreciate pictures made by child artists, because they do not look like that of adult artists. For them these are useless efforts on the part of children. Under these conditions, children can never feel close to their teachers, let alone develop a feeling of equality with them. They will develop a sense of inferiority, eventually resulting in the destruction of the freshness of their imaginative quality. In all likelihood, they will give up painting pictures altogether.

I have only given an indication in the direction that can lead to the relationship of trust and love between the teacher and the child, which consequently can create an appropriate and friendly atmosphere for art activities. One obvious outcome of this kind of atmosphere would be the uninhibited manner in which children would be able to open up their hearts to their teacher. What more is needed for self-expression? Art too is, most importantly, a healthy means of self-expression, in addition to providing to the children a sense of accomplishment. An atmosphere which does not encourage children to express their feelings to their teacher gives them wrong signals. Instead of talking frankly, they start saying exactly what the teacher wants to hear from them. It cultivates dishonesty and takes away all the possibilities of a healthy relationship. Where there is no trust in a relationship, there cannot be good education.

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6. Franz Cizek: quoted by Wilhelm Viola in *Child Art* (see 1) p. 37

A teacher can become a friend, a hero and the *guru*, who understands the nature of the child's self-expression, appreciates, it gains something out of it, and provides to the child a sense of security. The tendency of a good teacher will be not to find faults in children's work but to consider those errors as essential steps to growth.

It is this kind of approach that establishes trust between the teacher and the child. It also helps in creating a congenial climate for creative learning. Moreover, as already stated, one of the primary reasons for children going in for art activities is its potential for communication. The relationship of trust and love between the teacher and the children enhances the possibilities for children to open up their heart and express their feelings about everything they have in their conscious and unconscious mind. It is also an effective way- to give them a feeling of relief. Moreover, when the teacher can say to himself: 'like me, the child is also alert and alive', he has already discovered the way to reach the child with much to give.

In *Between Man and Man*, Martin Buber describes his perspective about the relationship between the teacher and the student. According to him, the teacher ought to be so alive that he can establish a person to person contact with his companion. But he should not do it for the sake of influencing them. The greatest influence he can have is by his presence, which is not due to his own choice, nor it is deliberately planned.

Rabindranath Tagore has put it as follows: "Joy emerges on its own when minds meet in a healthy spirit. That joy is the energy of creativity," and its result is "transference of knowledge. Those who are conscious of their duty, but do not experience that joy, tread on a different path. I consider the person to person relationship between the guru and shishya (disciple) the prime means of imparting knowledge."<sup>7</sup>

A sense of duty on the part of the teacher is not a sufficient requisite for being a *guru*, for it can neither inspire nor establish a relationship of trust and closeness in the pupil. Yes, as a conscientious teacher, he may work hard for the sake of the students, but that hard work results, at the most, in praise from students he teaches well. It does not generate any joyful energy. The generation of such creative energy can take place only when the teacher becomes a companion of his pupils rather than work mechanically. At another place Tagore says: "I have in my mind an image of a *guru*. He is not a machine, he is a human being, active and selfless. It is so because he is all the time preoccupied in the *sadhana*, the aim of which is human unity. Part of his *sadhana* is to activate the pupils mind into the dynamics of the stream. His companionship inspires in the life of the pupil the most valuable product of education, which is the perpetual wakefulness of the human mind."<sup>8</sup>

"The teacher whose child within has become like dead wood is not qualified to take the responsibility of children. There ought to be not only closeness but also identity and mental similitude, otherwise there cannot be any exchange between the two... The *eternal* child in a born teacher comes out in the open at the first call of children. From his hoarse voice comes a soft and lively smile. If the child does not recognize him as one of his own kind, but takes him to be a huge prehistoric animal, he will not be able to extend his gentle hand toward him fearlessly."<sup>9</sup>

Before going to the next chapter, I would like to quote Martin Buber, to explain further the kind of teacher-pupil relationship which I consider to be an ideal one "The relation in education is one of pure dialogue. I have referred to the child, lying with half-closed eyes waiting for his mother to speak to him. But many children do not need to wait, for they do know that they are unceasingly addressed in a dialogue which never breaks off. In face of the lonely night which threatens to invade, they lie preserved and guarded, invulnerable, clad in the silver mail of trust.

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7. Rabindranath. Tagore: (see 5), p. 311

8. ibid, p.312

9. ibid.p.312

"Trust, trust in the world, because this human being exists—that is the most inward achievement of the relation in education. Because this human being exists, meaninglessness, however hard pressed you are by it, cannot be real truth. Because this human being exists, in the darkness the light lies hidden, in fear salvation, and in the callousness of one's fellow-men the great Love.

"Because this human being exists: therefore he must be really there, really facing the child, not merely there in spirit... He need possess none of the perfections which the child may dream he possesses; but he must be really there. In order to be and to remain truly present to the child he must have gathered the child's presence into his own store as one of the bearers of his communion with the world, one of the focuses of his responsibilities for the world. Of course, he cannot be continually concerned with the child, either in thought or in deed, nor ought he to be. But if he has really gathered the child into his life then that subterranean dialogic, that steady potential presence of the one to the other is established and endures. Then there is reality *between* them, there is mutuality."<sup>10</sup>

Explaining his thoughts on such relationships Buber says: "We call friendship the third form of the dialogical relation, which is based on a concrete and mutual experience of inclusion. It is the true inclusion of one another by human souls.

"The educator who practises the experience of the other side and stands firm in it, experiences two things together, first that he is limited by otherness, and second that he receives grace by being bound to the other. He feels from "over there" the acceptance and the rejection of what is approaching (that is approaching from himself, the educator) of course often only in a fugitive mood or an uncertain feeling; but this discloses the real need in the soul... In learning from time to time, what this human being needs and does not need at the moment, the educator is to an ever deeper recognition of what the human being needs in order to grow. But he is also led to the recognition of what he, the "educator", is able and what he is unable to give of what is needed—and what he can give now, and what not yet. So, the responsibility for this living should—point him to that which seems impossible and yet is somehow granted to us, to self-education. But self-education, here as everywhere, cannot take place through one's being concerned with oneself but only through one's being concerned, knowing what it means with the world. The force of the world which the child needs for the building up of his substance must be chosen by the educator from the world and drawn into himself."<sup>11</sup>

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10. Martin Buber: Between Man and Man, Kegan Paul, London, 1947, p. 98.  
11. *ibid*, p.101

## ***Methodology of Child Art***



*Wealth is a golden cage in which the children of the rich are bred into artificial deadening of their powers. Therefore in my school, much to the disgust of the people of expensive habits, I had to provide for the great teacher—this bareness of furniture and material—not because it is poverty, but because it leads to personal experience of the world.<sup>1</sup>*

One of the most exciting and imaginative experiences for the teacher is to discover his or her own methodology. It makes it more exciting because there is no ready-made methodology related to handling child art in our country. I doubt if there is any standardized method of imparting art experiences to children anywhere in the world. Therefore, every teacher who wants to pursue the approach we have been discussing in this book will have to be a kind of pioneer in this field. After all, when Poet Tagore started his school at Santiniketan or when A.S. Neill Started his Summerhill School in England, there was nothing that they could follow to work through their ideas except their own vision, which was original at that point of time. The same would apply to teachers who wish to work for the world of child art to expand.

The thesis discussed here is: *Art should be the basis of education*. It is a comparatively- new concept in the modern educational world. Although some institutions have started holding exhibitions of children's drawings, paintings and models, there is hardly any school or institution that has taken child art seriously. Before the arrival of Franz Cizek on the scene, people, including teachers, used to laugh at the idea of children being artists. Today, the situation has changed. Some significant work has been done on this subject in a number of countries, especially in the UK and the USA.

It has now been well understood that the urge for self-expression among children is inherent and, when opportunities are provided, it finds outlets in various ways. It is similar to the desire of the cave dwellers to express their feelings, joys, fears and dreams or what have you, by drawing them on the walls of the rock shelters under which they lived.

The teacher who is supposed to, or wants to, help children with their art experiences has to understand the basic fact about the nature of the child's need and potential for drawing pictures and/or making sculptural forms. A keen teacher can learn a great deal from the work and experience of pioneers like Franz Cizek and others who have been innovative and successful in this field. But before going further into the subject, I want to repeat what has already been emphasized. As teachers, we must make sure in our minds that understanding and acceptance of the general philosophy behind Child Art is the primary requirement which should be fulfilled before dealing with children. It is only on that basis that a sound methodology can be built. Here, we can only give a few suggestions that might help teachers to work out their own methods for handling art activities for children. These suggestions should help in comprehending the problems involved rather than in solving them, which each teacher has to do himself or herself.

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1. Rabindranath Tagore: 'My School' in *Personality*, A Tagore Reader, Amiya Chakravarty(ed), Beacon Press, Boston, USA, 1961, p.220.

### ***When to Start? Tools and Materials***

As soon as the child is able to handle a pencil or any such material and starts scratching it on some surface, and creates marks on it, it is time to encourage him to draw pictures. It is the child's first experience and the first step of the journey to the world of picture making.

There is a generally held notion that children should be allowed or asked to make pictures only after they have learnt enough about shapes and colours. It is a mistaken notion and is against the nature of childhood. Children first learn about the world of forms and colours by letting out their responses through creative activities, e.g. painting pictures, clay modelling, etc. To understand form and colour, it is not sufficient to look at them in an abstract manner or understand them intellectually. It is essential to internalize the visual impressions by developing a feeling for them, and it is only by doing something concrete that children do so. Therefore, encouraging children to tackle forms and colours through picture-making is to help them understand the world around and obviously learn about forms and colours at the same time.

Some enterprising teachers have gone a step further. They have tried some interesting experiments by giving small children cups full of water colours, and large sheets of paper, but not brushes. While choosing the material, they made sure that the colours were totally harmless—non-toxic and safe for the skin. Children dipped their fingers and palms in the colours and made their "pictures" by splashing on the sheet of paper. It made interesting bold patterns and at the same time helped the children develop their muscular dexterity, along with the understanding of colours. It is an exciting way of self-expression and has become a somewhat popular technique among art teachers.

There is another notion, rather deeply seated, in the minds of some orthodox teachers. They think that children should first learn to draw with pencil and only after they have practiced it well enough, should they be given brushes and colours. They instruct the children to "draw the outlines first and then fill the spaces with pastel or crayon colours. Only after getting some practice in this technique may you use water colours or oil paints..." On the other hand, after some experience we came to the conclusion that the thin end of the pencil limits children within strict forms and boundaries. It does not allow them the freedom of movement they require for self-expression. If we want children to enjoy their work thoroughly and in an uninhibited manner, they should be provided with tools and materials that will allow them freedom and limitless possibilities to express their feelings without any hindrance.

### ***What Kind of Material***

During my childhood, I remember we were given pastel colours. It is good that the traditional pastel colours are going out of fashion. They are so fragile and smudgy that after using them for a while, children start disliking them. My feeling is that pastel colours are a good medium for mature artists. According to my experience, children like to use brushes, probably because a brush can be used in various ways to make thin lines as well as bold strokes and patches, to apply light and thin colours as well as heavy thick blocks. We have also seen that children like wax crayons, and thin and wide marking felt pens. These are also available in many colours. One thing the teacher should be careful about is that felt pens are wasteful and sometimes harmful.

Children develop their own preferences with regard to the material available. Different children like different material and techniques. Peer-group values and styles also influence their choices. If a child likes to use only a pencil, he or she should be free to do so. But sometimes a child may get stuck to only one kind of material and stagnate in the process of self-expression. The child, at that stage, requires help to get out of the stagnation. The teacher should know what to do on such an occasion. The child does not need teaching. He needs support in looking for new ideas.

If a child is not given opportunities to try different materials during the early stages, he might find it difficult to try new materials at a later state. For instance, those who have not-worked in water colours

earlier might find it difficult to use them at the age of eight or nine. It is a bit more difficult for children to keep control over water colours than, for instance, crayons. Some might even lose heart after trying it for a short while and give it up eventually. Generally speaking, most children like to use a variety of art materials. Children who never take to water colours are very few and far between.

Every now and then, while working at Sevagram, a question arose in our minds. Can we, or should we, provide our children with the variety of materials generally considered "good quality" by the art world? Provide such materials to all the children, in all the schools in cities, towns and half a million villages? Would it be financially practical? If we think of providing all the children, throughout the country, with cartridge paper, sketch books, Windsor and Newton colours, and Chiness brushes or even the second or third grades of such materials, the answer obviously is 'No'. This may be possible for a very small number of children, say about one per cent of all the Indian children under twelve, whose parents can afford them. We also asked ourselves: Is that expensive material absolutely necessary? Moreover, we firmly believed that there ought not to be any distinction between the rich and the poor, and that whatever was available for the well off section of the public should also be available to every one. Yet, we were convinced that for the sake of the healthy education of our children, there ought to be an adequate provision of the right kind of equipment and material in schools. What should be done then?

This brought us to a very relevant question. What did the Indian artists do hundred or two hundred years ago, when there were no "Reeves" or "Windsor & Newton" in India? We already knew the answer. They did not import their painting material from England or Germany. They made their own tools and the materials necessary for their art work. Even today, there are many artists who make their own colours from locally available material. As art students in Santiniketan, we made nearly half of our colours with locally available materials. So, why not experiment with it now! The kind of colours, brushes, etc. needed for children can easily be made in the art class itself. An enthusiastic teacher with the help of children, whether in the town or in the village, can make most of what is necessary from locally available material. We tried it quite successfully in our Sevagram school.

We knew that in the murals of Ajanta and in most of the Rajput and Mughal paintings, the colours and brushes used were made by the artists themselves. One colour that was difficult was blue. In some old paintings the blue is of lapislazuli, a semiprecious stone not commonly available. In Rajput paintings, the blue used was often vegetable indigo. For our art work in Sevagram, we used the common indigo powder, as the vegetable indigo does not last long. It fades away quickly, but that was not much of a problem for our child artists. We used, for instance, common yellow ochre earth for yellow, red ochre for brick red, soot for black, green stone for green and some vegetable colours. Brushes were made of hemp fibre with bamboo handles, hair from the ears and other parts of animals like goats and calves. Sticks of date-palm or ordinary palm leaves could also be made into nice hard brushes by gently crushing one end of the stick. For an enthusiastic teacher it can be an interesting activity, which can be correlated with other subjects. In itself it is creative and introduces the spirit of resourcefulness in children.

#### ***Guidance Rather than Teaching***

Child art being a term and concept not known widely in the educational world of India, very few teachers trained traditionally in the Anglo-Indian educational system, knew or understood the creative potential of the child. When such teachers visited the Sevagram school and came to my class, they often asked: "Are these children making their pictures or clay models according to your instructions?" My answer was: "No, not in eighty to ninety per cent cases". It is important here to explain why my answer could not be hundred per cent "No".

We have already discussed the psychogenesis of children's drawings. Beginning from the age of two or so with scribbling to the age of eleven to twelve, when they start making pictures which show some kind of similarity with the work of adults, children climb their natural ladder of growth without much break or hindrance and with minimum necessary guidance. But this happens only when they are provided with a supportive atmosphere which fulfils their need for communication and creative expression. We know that

such an atmosphere and the necessary encouragement is not always available. It is not only the school atmosphere that matters. The family and social environment also contribute to the development or otherwise of the child's personality. In spite of the encouraging atmosphere of the school, some children do experience difficulties in their creative expression, probably due to some other reasons. Hence, my answer to the question put by the visitors could not have been an emphatic "no". In other words, despite the fact that children need support and guidance *instructing* children to "make that or do this" is wrong, both psychologically and educationally.

My experience convinced me that even when the home atmosphere is not geared to the idea that *genuine freedom* is one of the greatest teacher, if the school atmosphere is oriented to it, the child often comes to the art class with his own ideas. If the classroom is properly equipped and arranged, some children may straight away start working on their themes. They do not need any stimulating talk, permission or instructions from the teacher. Although in their own mind they may be clear about it, it is very likely that if asked what they have in mind their answer may not be explicit. But that does not contradict the fact that some children do come with ideas for their pictures. This is so because of the encouraging atmosphere of the school. Children go on have new experiences all the time, which continues to stimulate their imagination.

What all this means is that, in addition to several other factors, there are three environmental factors which contribute in the making or destroying, of the inherent creative potential of children. One is, obviously, the family; the other concerns the values and aesthetic atmosphere of the society, and the third is the school.

What are the other factors that affect the growth of the child? Certain parameters are already drawn before, during and after birth. These depend on genetic factors, as well as on the conditions during conception and birth, some of which might remain unknown or unnoticed until much later, when they start surfacing.

The three factors I have mentioned above have their own perimetric possibilities or otherwise. Although the teacher has just a tiny part of the total responsibility for the growth of the child, much of the onus falls upon the educational philosophy and its set up, of which the teacher is the most important agent.

The implication is that the educational set up has to do a great amount of diagnostic work regarding each child—familial, social, medical and psychological. The educational set up has also to find out reasons behind a child developing various kinds of traits, problems and potential. We have seen that, very often, lack of new experiences does not allow a child to express its inner feelings. It may be that the child is not getting enough of the freedom required for experiencing new things. Could it be a simple case of malnutrition and poor health? Or something related to the home situation? Or is it something that has created a feeling of inferiority or defeatism in the child? Could it be too much criticism that has made the child hesitant to do anything new? Are there any other biological or emotional reasons? It could be a mixture of various factors, which need to be discovered.

Some of these problems or inhibitions may become visible at the age of eight or nine, or even earlier. At that stage, the child needs the greatest support. If the family is sensitive and the teacher enlightened enough, the child may be able to overcome, to a certain extent, the hurdles created by some of these factors. In other words, the atmosphere in the school has a crucial role to play in the development of the child's personality.

### ***Good Habits***

The tale of good habits might sound mundane and probably considered of no consequence in the context of modern trends in education as also in the cultural life of the community. Nevertheless, I have found that forming good habits is essential for the healthy development of the child's personality. For instance, correct posture while working has a bearing on good health. But more than that, it helps in creative concentration. Choosing the right working place with proper lighting is necessary from the point of view

of health as well as work efficiency. Sitting in front of a window or against the light can be disturbing and harmful to the eyes. It can also distort the visual image of objects right in front of the child painting or doing clay modelling. If the light does not fall on the working surface from the correct direction it can distort both colour and form. A right-handed child should have the light falling on the picture from the left side and a left-handed should have it from the right. For maintaining a relaxed and yet serious mood, while doing the activities of self-expression it is good to be on one's own, meaning thereby that children should not have to sit in a congested and regimented manner. If they sit in a crowd they maybe inclined to get influenced by each other.

The correct use of tools is often ignored by most teachers and parents. At a very early stage children hold pencils and pens and even brushes very close to the marking end. I have hardly seen any teacher giving guidance to children about the need to hold these tools properly, so that they can be used effectively. Holding a pencil or a pen very close to the writing end generates timidity, which results in drawings with very small lines and small in size. It does not encourage the child to draw with freedom and boldness. From my own experience I have found that for drawing it is good to hold the pencil at least four centimetres away from its marking end. While sketching, it is better to hold it eight to ten centimetres away; it gives better and freer movement.

Here I am not talking about teaching techniques of drawing and painting. I am only saying that teaching the correct or rather effective use of tools is essential for encouraging the child to invent his own technique, the way all good artists do. I know that some well-known artists did not even learn to use their tools properly; but it would be too naive to think that every child is going to be a great artist in later life. It is, therefore, essential for every child to imbibe good habits right from his earliest years, especially for creative work.

Another factor to be constantly careful about is the need or keeping the art material and tools meticulously clean. Children have to be regularly guided to use and maintain all the art material, colours, brushes, etc. neatly. It is not a matter of only inculcating good habits. There is much more to it. Children have to be made aware of the fact that with dirty brushes and a smudgy palette they cannot make a nice picture. Assuming that each of the several colours available to the child is prepared in a separate bowl, it is necessary for the child to understand that the brush he or she is using is properly washed each time it is used for a different colour. Otherwise the colours in the bowls will get mixed up and lose their freshness, thus making them useless. The child could be provided with a set of brushes for each colour; but then, would it not be extravagant?

The water kept in a biggish bowl becomes dirty after a little use, hence it must be changed as soon as it shows a cloudy shade. The artist's hands, the board on which the paper is fixed, and the desk or the easel must be kept clean. Otherwise the picture will lose its freshness. If this aspect of the child's art activities is looked after well, it will not only help in keeping the pictures clean but, more importantly, will give a habit of cleanliness and enhance the child's aesthetic sense, and, eventually, his creativity.

Such basic principles have to be given priority not only in the children's art activities but in every kind of activity they are engaged in. A correct posture, apart from being essential for good health, gives full freedom of movement to the whole body. Hands, from shoulders to the tips of fingers, must remain free for every movement required for painting. Children should learn to make the fullest use of the entire hand. When the hand is free, the mind too feels liberated.

Sometimes, for some reason or the other, children do not feel like completing a picture. The teacher's responsibility in this regard is to encourage him to complete the picture he has started to paint. Generally children do complete their painting in one sitting. The only exception for the teacher to make in this connection is to find out if the picture the child has started painting needs further work to be done in the next art class. The decision in this matter, however, has to be made by the child artist himself. In any case,

the task of the teacher is to make sure that the child understands that no new painting or modelling should be started before the work in hand has been completed.

#### **Sense of Colour and Form**

Children grasp the differences between colour and form during the course of art activities. Yet, it is advisable to help them to understand the differences in a more concrete form. This, though, should be done in such a manner that the understanding imparted on the subject does not take away the spontaneity of self-expression. The teacher has to realize that knowledge about the differences between various shades of colours and type of forms imparted to the child, is meant to assist the child in his work of painting pictures, making sculptures or doing handicrafts.

What is the difference between the leaf of a mango tree and the banana tree? How does the colour of the earth and the sky differ from each other? Ordinarily speaking, these questions sound simplistic, but the importance of the child's answer lies in the way he is able to explain the differences in the language of form and colour, rather than in words. He should be able to explain the difference of the forms as well as the colours of the two leaves. Children, by and large, become aware of the subtle differences between forms and colours in the course of their painting work, but it is also necessary to give that knowledge by using special methods. At one level, it is part of the process which establishes a close contact with nature and the aspects of its beauty.

#### **Names of Colours and Similitude**

The Indian philosophy of colour and form provides a special approach in this respect. In a classical treatise on art, it is said that there are six aspects of painting. One of these aspects is *sadrishyam* (similitude). It aims at finding parallels in form and colours. For instance, if I want to describe the eyes of someone, I could say that their shape or form is similar to the form of a fish. A particular shape of a human torso can be described as akin to the face of a cow. These similitudes are also used to describe the beauty of particular parts or the whole body of a person.

The same approach applies to colours as well. It is very different from the Western practice of naming colours. It is difficult for many to grasp the actual character of a colour, say, new blue or even Indian red, Prussian blue etc. On the other hand, if green is named after a parrot, blue after the sky, or red as red lead, it brings the colour as well as the object it is named after right in front of your eyes, without any confusion about the shade of the colour. You see parrots dancing and the vast blue sky in front of your eyes. The deeper reason behind developing such an aesthetic approach is the effort to bring human beings closer to nature, making them a part of nature. My plea to the educational world and all the teachers of children is that this kind of approach should become part and parcel of educational work. Every bit of it should be geared to the concept of human beings being an integral part of nature.

#### **Grouping of Children**

How do you group children for art activities? It is an important question. It is not helpful to place children, who are still in the stage of symbols, with those who may be entering or may have already entered, the stage of adolescence. By doing so, there will be an undue adult influence on the younger children. In situations where grouping is necessary, it is recommended that children be placed in three different groups—one, of the youngest ones (between seven and eight), the second of children between eight and ten, and the third of those older than eleven. Having stated that, I must point out that there ought to be occasions when children of all ages do work together. Such occasions could be created by planning collective school projects. In a project of that kind there will be opportunities for children of all ages to work together, but according to their own nature and capacity. In such situations we should not insist on dividing children according to their ages.

It very often happens that a child continues making the same picture everytime he or she comes to the art class. As teachers, we must understand this problem thoroughly. I firmly believe that art activities are a true mirror of the child's total personality. There are aspects of a child's psychological state -which can be

well understood from his creative work. Along with its creative aspect, the diagnostic aspect of art is equally important.

There must be some psychological reason behind a child's repetition of work. There must be a defect somewhere in the kind of life the child is leading and the education he is receiving. One likely diagnosis can be that the education the child is receiving in school or in his home is superficial. He is unable to internalize much of what he is receiving or experiencing. If the teacher realizes that when a child is making the same picture all the time, it could be on account of the fact that the education he is receiving is not entering the child's mind and heart, he should make the required change in his teaching method.

I should describe one of my experiences in this context. A child continued making the same picture for eight months. A house with a path leading to it. On one or two occasions, there appeared a boy on the road, and the sky at the top. That was all he painted every time he came to the art class. I tried almost everything I could think of to get this child off this fixation. Many a time I suggested that he make a kind of picture which he had never made before. And of course, I failed, although such a suggestion often works. One day, I suggested that he go through his drawing book and tell me how many different kinds of pictures he had made until now. I tried to bring it home to him that he was making the same picture all the time, and that "today at least he could make a new one". In this, too, I was unsuccessful.

It was the time of the year when one of the large fields of our school farm was covered with brilliant golden yellow sunflowers. It was the most impressive and exhilarating experience for me whenever I went to see it. It was not visible from our art studio. I wanted to find out what kind of impact it would make on children. Next day, when the same group of children came to the class I suggested a short picnic in the field. They were excited. One of them asked if they should carry their drawing books and colours with them. I said: "We shall play, enjoy and admire the beauty of nature. If we wish to make, pictures we shall do so after returning from the picnic".

I had already described the field as if the Sun has come to visit our earth. Many of them had not yet seen the sunflower field. They became very enthusiastic about our visit to the Sun. They jumped and ran towards the field which had already started challenging them from some distance. I told them that they had all the freedom to move about in the field, but they should not do any harm to the crop and not pluck flowers. "We do not want to displease the beautiful Sun." All of them entered the field like monkeys; they sang and made noises of happiness. After enjoying every bit of it for half an hour, we returned to the classroom.

There was still plenty of time before the end of the art period. So I said: "As there is enough time for making a picture why not make one of anything you like, preferably of something you have enjoyed most". Many of the children painted sunflowers. Among them was also my little friend who had repeatedly been painting the house with a curved road! That day his heart opened up to things other than his 'favourite' house. He must have felt that there are many other things in this world worth seeing and experiencing.

The conclusion I drew from the above experience is that the issues involved in the problem are not related only to art education. It is an issue that should concern the entire educational world. Every teacher can make a significant contribution by understanding the child's inner needs. And evoking the creative urge of every child.

#### ***A Variety of Mediums***

Sometimes, lack of choice on account of a limited number of mediums can become a hindrance in the process of self-expression. It has already been stated that the choice of medium is a personal matter. It is not unlikely that a child might start feeling bored by using the same medium for a long time, and may lose interest in art activities. Children look for new experiences all the time. The life of a child is necessarily oriented to the longing for new discoveries. It is not always possible to communicate all the experiences through the same medium. That is one of the reasons for the school to make various art mediums available

to children, so that they can choose the one appropriate to their need and temperament, for their self-expression at that particular time.

They should be able to work in mediums such as water colours, crayons, pen and ink, lino-cut, woodcut, clay, papier mache. It is not necessary that children make pictures only on paper. Clay work, modelling, etc. are equally inspiring if available at the right moment. I have had very positive experiences with children doing pottery either on the wheel or by coil or slab method. I was more and more convinced about the special role of the potter's wheel in the education of children of all ages.

The following techniques and mediums are highly recommended to encourage the child to grow as a healthy person.

#### ***Illustrating Stories***

One method could be telling the whole group an interesting story and suggesting that they put the story, or part of it, in pictures. Children themselves may tell stories of their own choice. Two or three children may tell their favourite stories, from which the group may choose one. This exercise can stimulate children's imagination. It can be specially useful to those who may be slow in getting new ideas for their paintings.

I should describe an exercise I often used and found quite effective. Ask the children to sit silently in a good posture with eyes shut for a few minutes. When the whole group seems ready, the teacher tells a short story or one of his experiences in a rather dramatic manner, as if the children are watching a film. The description of scenes can be enriched with similes and with feelings. This exercise, if well carried out, can actually create pictures in the minds of children, which they would probably like to put on paper or make models of.

#### ***Suggestions of Subjects***

There can be countless suggestions of subjects children can make pictures about. Please see *illus nos.* 2,5,9, 13,36, 37,38,47 to 51 & cover illustration which may be helpful to teachers in this connection.

Here are a few examples:

1. You are going for a walk with your parents.
2. Escorting your younger brother or sister to the school.
3. Your family is working in the garden, planting trees.
4. What part did you play in the village festival?
5. You went for a picnic to enjoy nature. What was your most interesting experience? Draw a picture.
6. Children playing in the street.
7. Make a picture of what you liked most in the last Sunday market you went to.
8. Some group-work in the school.
9. You are decorating your house for a festival.
10. Draw a picture of the acrobat who visited your street the other day.
11. You are giving a lecture to a big crowd of people.

There can be an endless list of subjects and topics that can be occasionally suggested to the children collectively.

I would like to share here an experience I had with the children of the fourth grade—average age, eleven years. It so happened that for a while, whenever this group of children came to the art class, it rained heavily. Soon after entering the class they got into a light mood and started questioning each other: "Why does it always rain on the day of our art class!" An idea suddenly came to me. I said, "I hear the rain saying to you: I always see you coming to the art class to make beautiful pictures; but you have never made a picture of me. Unless you make my picture I shall go on drenching you every time you come to this class. "The children responded with enthusiasm and announced that each one of them would make a picture on the theme "A Rainy Day", (*illus. no. 13*)

Here, considerable flexibility is required on the part of the teacher. Howsoever carefully and "democratically" a theme is chosen, there should not be any insistence that every child ought to make his picture on that particular theme. It is very likely that some of the children already had a subject in mind for that day's picture. After preparing the background for the day by helping the children in choosing that theme, it is advisable to leave them free to do what they wish. Any kind of insistence can mar the children's enthusiasm.

Sometimes, children might like to make pictures of different aspects of the same topic. If it is a long story, the children may like to illustrate the full story by making several pictures. Actually, it can be made into a full fledged project. I have already described my experiment about "writing and publishing" books by children in Chapter two. It is an interesting way to conduct group projects. Some of the children may like to make illustrations, some do calligraphy, some may like to write their own stories or essays. A few of them may be interested in binding the books thus produced. Such a project can link together many of the activities that go on in the school, under different subjects, and can be organized as school projects.

I have successfully conducted some experiments to build a feeling of collective creativity within the children's community. Once we prepared a large surface for painting by joining together several sheets of paper, six to seven feet long. The entire group took part in making the picture, without anybody having the faintest idea about what kind of picture was going to emerge in the end. Six or seven colours were made ready in separate bowls and several sizes of brushes kept ready with a large bowl of water. Each one of us (I was also an active part of the group) went in front of the large sheet of paper, chose a brush and put one stroke with the colour of our choice and kept the brush down. We could keep the brush touching the paper as long as necessary. But once the brush moved away from the surface of the paper, our turn was over until the next round.

For some time, no one was able to guess what was emerging on the surface. The more alert members of the group made every effort to make sense out of the brush strokes which had already been made by others; they used their turn to give a particular meaning to the images. At the end, "sensible" forms started emerging and all the artists started linking them together in a meaningful way. When the exercise was complete everyone felt elated as an integrated part of the great team of artists.

One of the positive factors about the above exercise was that each member of the group made an effort to reach a common goal, even though every one at the start of the exercise kept imagining his own pattern of the possible final result. The fact that the final picture was a collective creation was a matter of pride for all of us.

#### ***Mutual Evaluation***

The child may, and often does, feel a pressure when criticism or evaluation is made by the teacher. But when it comes from within the group, it works as guidance. Even harsh comments from the peer group do not create an inferiority complex in children. If all the children display their work on the walls during the last ten or fifteen minutes of the class, and all the children express their opinions on every picture, the effect of the criticism will prove useful to the artist in understanding his work.

#### ***School Time table and the Art Class***

Art activities will yield maximum benefit if they are conducted in the following two ways. Firstly, there has to be a specific time allotted for art activities for all the school children in the time table. Secondly, there should be a provision for children to go to the art studio and do the creative work they may have in mind. A child will go to the art room at a time other than the specified art periods only if he or she has a concrete plan in mind. Moreover, on such an occasion, he should also have the medium in which he or she would like to work at the time. This implies that the school art workshop is properly equipped and the kind of assistance children need to express their feeling, and experiences is available.

When children come to my class, most of them choose their task without any pressure. If, on one of the days, a child makes a large picture, he may go directly to the pottery in the next class. In this manner, children have a wide choice of mediums and techniques for self-expression. The school can make a wide choice available without going into undue expenditure or a big establishment. Painting with two or three kinds of colours, lino and wood-cut printing, stencil and paper-cutting, pottery and clay modelling, ornamental work like alpana (decoration for special occasions) applique work, etc. can be organized with very little resources.

#### **Size of Paper**

Children love novelty and look for it wherever and whenever they find the opportunity. Although it is a matter of common knowledge, I want to emphasize that teachers ought to make it a point to use this inclination of children to enhance their interests and good taste. Just to illustrate the point, I shall take up the question of the size of paper available to children for painting pictures. Generally, teachers have them only of one size, which does not give children the opportunity of planning their pictures on papers of different sizes and proportions. Size and proportion of the paper—square or oblong—does to a considerable extent, influence the style of work of the artist. Therefore, it is important, specially for child-artists, that they have a choice of the medium.

A careful teacher will keep note of the size of paper that children choose for their pictures. If a child always chooses a small sheet, he ought to be encouraged to try to paint on larger sizes. The reason behind encouraging children to make large pictures is to make their hand and body movements bold and free and to help them to get rid of their hesitation. It also helps the child in understanding the nature of distance and the third dimension.

One big problem in using large sheets of paper is the cost involved. In a country like India, most schools would be unable to afford the cost of large sheets of paper. However, it is not essential that children should use expensive paper. I have found that even old newspaper is quite suitable for this purpose. We chose those sheets which did not have photographs or big advertisements. Pictures with large brushes and tempera colours do not look too bad on them. Another variation of this suggestion is that a white opaque colour be painted on the paper before making the picture. Alternatively, new newsprint can also be used. It is not too expensive.

The idea of encouraging children to draw large pictures is a recent one. Children in the West had no way to draw boldly on large surfaces. But in India there has been the age old folk tradition of doing floral decoration and painting on walls, e.g. *rangoli* and *alpana*. Making *alpana* and *rangoli* on the floor provides ample opportunity for people to use their fingers, hands, in fact the whole body, boldly. It does not imply that we do not need to emphasize the use of large sheets of paper. The most important factor in this context is that drawing on large areas helps children in developing the sense of space.

Once I was able to obtain a lot of long strips of paper cut off from large sheets from the Sevagram printing press. They were made available to children in the art class. When one of them looked at these sheets, he got an idea of painting a train. He took a strip and drew an engine and two bogies on it. Others too got similar ideas; one of them was seen joining six or seven strips together, on which he painted a nearly ten-foot long train. It only shows that making a variety of materials available also results in children getting fresh ideas for art work. Teachers should take advantage of this phenomenon.

#### **Perspective Drawing**

At the time of getting into the later part of the stage of realism, the child starts feeling the need to introduce a sense of depth in his pictures. He is no longer satisfied with the two-dimensional character of his pictures, he needs to show that the objects in his picture are also placed in depth. If the social atmosphere indicates an understanding of child art and children are bold enough to experiment, some of them will overcome this problem by their own efforts (*illus. nos. 13 & 18*). Others would need help. If adequate help is not given at that time, it is likely that some children will feel disheartened and may even

become disinterested in art activities. At this juncture, the teacher's responsibility is to help the child in developing the skill of observation.

Children have come to me and said: "I can see the side of the room quite well but I'm unable to draw it"; "it seems that the hill is on the top of the tree, but I know that in reality the tree is on the hill. How do I draw it?" What can, or should, the teacher do at such a time? Should he actually draw the scene and make the child copy it? Should the child be shown paintings that depict a correct sense of perspective? My experience has convinced me that such solutions make the child's path of learning weak. Our task here is to help the child in learning to observe more and more closely and with an analytical approach. The principle I discovered and tried to expound is: Help the artist in the child not by showing how to draw a picture, but by encouragement to discover the basic drawing rudimentary principles of perspective by careful observation".

At the age of about twelve or thirteen, when there is a need to learn the principles of perspective drawing, it is advisable to introduce the child to its simple rules. Such an advice may be given to children who ask for it. There are some simple observations which, if explained to those children, can make things easier for them. For instance, an object kept nearer looks larger than what it would if kept at a distance. The railway line is a good example. If you stand in the middle of the two rails and see them going towards the horizon, you feel as if the distance between the two is gradually diminishing, although we know that the distance is equal throughout. The distant roadside trees look smaller from a distance, whereas the trees nearer to you look much taller.

The teacher can find many occasions when he can draw the child's attention to this phenomenon in nature and explain the principle of the "vanishing point" of two parallel lines. If a child makes the side walls of a cubical object at an angle to show depth and does not think it to be "wrong", he is not yet ready for learning the principles of perspective drawing. When he starts having doubts about its correctness, he needs help. He has to learn to see that all the corners of a cubical object, room, box, cupboard, etc. are and, for practical purposes, look, perpendicular to the ground from whichever angle you see them.

One always comes across some children who may never feel the need to show the perspective aspect in their pictures, even at the time of entering adolescence. I do not consider them backward. Probably they belong to the type of individuals who, by nature, have the spirit and potential of becoming artists. Acharya Nandalal Bose wrote in his book *Shilpa Katha*: "Great works of art have been created both in East and West, in defiance of the rules of perspective, the spirit of which is self-evident. The reason behind it can briefly be stated as follows: In those cases an integration/identification between the subject and the object, the artist and the contents of his art has taken place. They have become one." When a child artist reaches adulthood and enters or is on the way to enter that state of mind, he has become an artist who does not have to follow the rules of perspective.

### ***Handicrafts***

Handicrafts are equally important. Some children have a special liking for crafts. At some stage, they prefer handicrafts to drawing and painting or modelling or for that matter, some other medium. To let children find out something about their own taste and likes and dislikes, it is important that they are given all the possible opportunities to make their own choices.

There are activities which require both the skills—painting as well as crafts. For instance, lino-cut and wood-cut printing, montage with various kinds of material, coloured paper, cloth, old newspaper, etc. are interesting activities that generate a good degree of interest in children. The use of such mediums has an additional advantage. It helps children to clarify their understanding of form. (See the lino prints at the beginning of each chapter and *illus. nos. 45 & 46*)

Later, after entering the stage of realism, the child should have the opportunity to fulfil his need for self-expression through other crafts; especially when the child starts feeling somewhat hesitant to draw and

paint. Some even tend to give them up, a tendency which we have already mentioned. At that moment, handicrafts provide children with incentives for self-expression. It can be any meaningful craft, but the choice has to be of the child concerned and the basis of the choice should be creativity and aesthetics.

### **Decorative Work**

Decoration and ornamentation is a basic need of human beings, as individuals as well as a community. It simply cannot be left out from our educational programming. Every item, be it a painting, sculpture, handicraft or any other thing that requires "making", has to be designed. Questions about rhythm, symmetry, balance, etc. are essential for making an object beautiful and functionally acceptable. R.R. Tomlinson wrote: "The most notable development in art education that has taken place in recent years is about teaching to make patterns. Pattern making is a form of self-expression and its importance is related to the design aspect of painting pictures. For some people, pattern making, like many Western schools of painting, can be a complete language by itself for visual expression... The kind of awareness that has been growing in our schools (in the United Kingdom) has made a very useful impact on children's potential for painting actualities. It will create and enhance the understanding about art in children as well as adolescents..."

'From the point of view of the statement of R.R. Tomlinson, it is interesting to note that in every state and region of India, there are traditions of ornamental decoration, e.g. *alpana* in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; *maandani* in UP and Rajasthan; and in the South *rangoli*, *muggoo* and *kolam*. These traditions have a high level of aesthetic value, which can be most useful for the furthering of children's as well as adolescents' creative activities. In the contemporary context, it will be advisable to encourage children also to create their own patterns, based on the study of natural forms and rhythm. This principle should be applicable to everything they make, e.g. pictures, models, crafts and floral decoration.'

If a child is unable to conceptualize the idea of discovering patterns from nature, the teacher can make basic suggestions to the child to start from simple forms. For example: Take two leaves from two different plants and arrange them alternatively—shape and/or direction wise—to make a border; arrange one or more simple form(s) in a symmetrical order; choose, some geometrical shapes and make an orderly arrangement out of them to suit the purpose. There can be a number of ideas, which can give the child a conceptual grasp of the pattern-making processes. Such a contact with and understanding of nature is helpful not only in the mechanical aspect of pattern-making but also other activities in life, and more importantly, in creating a sympathetic closeness with nature.

A teacher who has taken trouble in developing such skills himself, will also be an inspiration to children for growing up as resourceful individuals. Nature provides an extraordinarily rich treasure of material, which only a well-versed person can utilize, even in a situation where he may not have been quite prepared. While organizing school picnics, teachers should always plan the aesthetic side of the occasion. They are always fully equipped with the arrangement for food and games, but may not have thought of making the place of picnic ritually a little beautiful. There may be a well rehearsed programme of group or solo dances, but they would in all likelihood have forgotten the decorative aspect of the programme. In such situations, it can be exciting for children to go around and collect various objects from nature—leaves, flowers, earth of different colours and textures—for floral and overhead decoration. The main points I am making here are: Developing resourcefulness and discovering the basic principles of pattern making, "in other words the grammar of rhythm, balance and harmony, which are also the essential elements of all creativity and good living."

Let us now discuss some of the important principles related to pattern-making. Two of the important aspects of pattern-making are: rhythm and repetition. Patterns for borders involve repetitive forms. Symmetry, almost always, requires repetition. Where there is very little repetitive work, rhythm becomes the major objective. It is very much like music. In Indian music, for example, there is always a rhythmic cycle. After improvising the musical form, within the rhythmic cycle, the musician returns to the first beat of the cycle. For dealing with the early adolescence period, the teacher should be fully prepared,

technically as well as intellectually, so as to be able to help the child to understand the importance of the principles in the art of pattern making, which is similar to that of grammar in learning and practising a language.

Several mediums and techniques can be used to give the students a good grounding in pattern-making for various purposes. Cutting stencils on paper or thin metal sheets and printing them with brushes, roller or spray gun, for older children; cutting blocks on potatoes and printing them on paper or cloth with the help of an ink pad made with old cloth, for younger children. It is simple enough to work with the spirit of "do-it-yourself".

The next principle I want to mention is the aspect of space management. It concerns the relationship between the space and the form drawn on it, their character and proportion. It would look awkward if some components of the pattern or one or more of its sections were made with natural forms and the other with symbolic or ornamental forms. In other words, it is essential to have a harmonious relationship and similarity of character between forms in a pattern. The same principle should be applied to its spatial aspect also. It is only then that the pattern would be pleasing to the eye.

Another principle about which the teacher ought to be clear in his or her mind is the functional aspect of the design. It should be appropriate for its usage. For instance, if a pattern is made for a border of a sari it cannot be applied on a material meant to be for a shirt. Similarly, an *alpana* made in a room, parallel to the walls as a border, will not look nice if it is made in front of a dais or a ceremonial spot. Patterns characteristic of *alpana* do not give the same rhythmic feeling if used in making *rangoli*. Engraved pattern on wood is not suited for cloth printing. In short, the principle of *suitability* is also an important factor in pattern-making, which should be brought home to the students who are inclined toward this activity.

There is a need to give special attention to the art of pattern-making, precisely because, today, in almost every activity, designing has become an essential element. It is an inseparable part of art education, particularly of the adolescent. Ignoring it would only mean that the teacher does not understand the value and importance of art education in contemporary life. Nor is he or she able to appreciate art in its various forms.

### ***The Class Room***

It is ideal to have a separate, large, well lit room for art activities in every school. But we all know that an average village school, unfortunately, does not have even a room each for all the classes. What could be the solution in such a situation? In case the school has only one room for all the classes, it would help to keep that room nicely arranged so that it generates some inspiration in the children to do some creative activities. Paintings by children can be displayed with care on the walls of the room. The display should be changed regularly, as and when there are new works done by the children. Actually, children themselves like to arrange these periodic exhibitions. There is no need to buy readymade equipment for the display. Simple items such as bamboo or cane mats can be used as background and acacia (*babool*) thorns as pins to fix the pictures. It would not only be the least expensive, but would also be an exercise in aesthetic understanding and resourcefulness. Children's artwork, aesthetically arranged on the walls of the classroom, is always a source of encouragement for them.

If there are more rooms than one in the school, the teachers' council can decide to allocate one of the classrooms to be used as the art room. It should be arranged in the manner described above. One side of the room will have the art material and equipment, well arranged and neatly maintained so that it will be inviting to the children to sit there and work on their pictures or whatever art work they want to do. I need not reiterate the fact that the child is all the time ready to accept new challenges.

Another idea worth following is to arrange wall displays of the art work by children of other schools. My own experience in this regard has been very positive. It has always helped children with new ideas. It will not be an overstatement to say that a creative atmosphere is as important as having a good teacher. In

other words, the quality of education will be good if the educational climate of the school is sound and creative. In an earlier chapter we have discussed this subject at full length. We have emphasized the fact that it is the responsibility of the teacher to create a sound educational atmosphere and that the quality of education depends on it.

It will be more than sufficient if teachers who are beginning to take child art seriously are able to follow the information and suggestions based on the experience of many experienced teachers and educational thinkers. If teachers are able to perform their duties in this manner, there is no doubt their pupils will experience the feelings of joy and fulfilment. Moreover, teachers who are able to continue studying childhood and the issues that affect the child's growth, can make their work more scientific and interesting.

#### ***Psychological Types***

Educational psychologists divide people into various types according to their natural characteristics, tastes and tendencies. It is expected that educators take these into account while making their educational plans. If a person is inclined toward literature, the educational programme ought to be based in such a way that his or her inclination is given all the necessary support and incentive. Some may be of the "technical type"; in a literary frame, they would prove to be misfits. They would be miserable and gain nothing. In fact, it might do them harm. Therefore, a good understanding of human nature is a basic need for planning educational programmes.

There are various kinds of typological categories worked out by psychologists. Teachers can learn a great deal from studying about it, and improve their understanding of the child. If teachers are able to grasp the importance of understanding the nature of every child in their class according to his psychological type, it will help them in planning their work more scientifically. Thus, they will be better equipped for giving the appropriate guidance to their pupils, and develop a sympathetic attitude toward their work. It is not my task here to go into the academic aspect of the subject. At the end of this book, there is a bibliography which should help in making a further, in-depth study in this field.

#### ***Keeping Record of Children's Art Work***

A systematic routine that is needed to make the work of the teacher more effective is the practice of keeping record of the art work done by children. Beginning from the first scribblings of a child, the teacher should regularly pick up some representative work by him and keep them in a file in a systematic manner. It will help in assessing the growth and development of the child, and when the time comes, it may also assist in guiding the child's future educational programme. One has to be careful not to pile up all the drawings of children. There ought to be a selective process. The file should be so arranged that a quick glimpse should be sufficient to provide a fairly good idea of the child's growth. If the child artist wants to see his file, it should make him understand whether he is making progress or not. A child who has been making similar kinds of pictures all the time, should be able to realize the fact even without the teacher telling him that he is not being very creative. Such a file is also useful at the time of arranging exhibitions of their work.

I had preserved many pictures made by our pupils over long periods. These files gain further importance when we exchange work by our children with the work of children of other schools. When children learn about such exchanges, they feel thrilled and encouraged. A by-product of such activities is the generation of friendship among children of several schools and the enhancement of their aesthetic sense.

## Art Appreciation



*When I see the Universe  
through my songs, I recognize  
it, then only I know it.<sup>1</sup>*

Art appreciation is an integral part of art education. Ordinarily, it implies a historical and analytical knowledge of the art traditions of one's own culture as well as that of others. However, I attach a much wider connotation and greater importance to it than is implied by its commonplace definition. In this chapter, we shall try to explore the possibilities of creating a deeper understanding of art among people at large and children, who have reached their adolescence, in particular.

During his early years, the child has neither the need to learn anything about what is understood to be art appreciation, nor does it help the child in his artistic creativity. It is helpful only during and after the child has reached the stage when such knowledge makes sense along with his intellectual growth and emotional clarity. It is not implied here that children do not need to get acquainted with good examples of art, past and present. In fact the more good paintings, sculptures and handicrafts children see, the more inspired they are with new ideas and experiences.

As far as giving knowledge about art appreciation is concerned, I can say, with all the emphasis possible, that the influence of adult art harms the creativity of children of preadolescent age. This simple fact has been emphasized on various occasions in this book. However, as far as adolescents are concerned, they do benefit from the knowledge of various art traditions. It is because at the beginning of the stage of adolescence, one feels the need to work as an adult. So, instead of showing him examples of cheap and popular taste, it will obviously be more sensible that he studies, in his own way, the examples of art that are more or less universally accepted as great art.

Every society has its own art traditions, classical as well as folk, which have become part and parcel of the life of the people. Hence, one's own art traditions should be at the top of the list of art traditions to be acquainted with. Once you understand your own traditions well, it is easier to understand that of others.

There are two major aspects of art appreciation. Firstly, art should be understood through nature, and secondly, it should help in the understanding of nature. Genuine understanding of art is intimately related to one's identification with nature. So, the first requirement is to try to reach nature through the medium of art. In other words, to be able to understand and appreciate art, it is necessary to study the principles of balance and rhythm in nature. The two paths run parallel, yet are intimately related to each other. In fact, they are mutually interdependent. The teacher who knows that art appreciation is an important part of the education of the adolescent, should also create situations wherein the student is able to discover the close relationship between art and nature. At this juncture, I must point out that by nature I do not mean only its visual aspect. Nature here should be understood in its totality, of which its visual aspect is only a part.

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1. Rabindranath Tagore : *Gitabitan*, VB Publishers, Calcutta; p.577

Generally speaking, school or college syllabi for art appreciation are not much more than a list of facts to be learnt by rote. For example, some experts on the subject may have gathered loads of historical information about the art of a particular region or culture. They are also able to write books on the subject, but, in all likelihood, may not have become sensitive enough to the aesthetic value of the art objects of that culture. Most probably they would choose calendar type pictures, when they went to the art market to buy paintings for their living-rooms, lobbies and bedrooms. They may be able to unhesitatingly point to a painting and tell you that it belongs to a particular school, period or cultural background. But that kind of art appreciation is not of much use.

By art appreciation, we mean an understanding of good art, developing the sense of aesthetics, and differentiating between beautiful and ugly objects. What we mean by it is developing the sensitivity to pick up a piece of good art at first sight.

The historical aspect of art appreciation is its secondary requisite. Without adding anything more to it, I shall only describe what Acharya Nandalal Bose once said. He had put it in a very helpful manner. While expressing his scheme, he had the university educational system and its teachers in mind. I have no doubt that teachers everywhere will find these ideas fully applicable in their own situations. The Acharya had said: "the first thing to do is to keep a display of good examples of arts and crafts in the school library, class rooms, reading rooms and living rooms. If original objects are not obtainable, their good photographs and reproductions should be displayed.

"Secondly, the school library should have a good number of books with fine reproductions of art objects, written by people who understand art and aesthetics. We may have to get such books written by the right kind of authors specially for school libraries.

"The third thing to do is to introduce children to selected examples of art of your own culture as well as of other regions of the world. It can be effectively accomplished by showing slides and films."

"The fourth suggestion is for teachers to take their students to museums and galleries to let them get acquainted with the art of the past epochs. If schools can arrange for students to go to football matches, why shouldn't visiting art galleries be possible. It should be remembered that one single well planned study of an example of good art can be more effective for training the eye than listening to a hundred lectures. Looking at good art objects with some understanding, or even without it, from an early age, helps in developing an eye for art and the capability to differentiate between good and bad art, which also enhances the aesthetic sense.

"The fifth suggestion is about bringing children closer to nature. To achieve this objective, organizing seasonal festivals has been found useful. Much of the work connected with such festivals can be done by children themselves. They can collect flowers and leaves and other objects specially associated with each season, and do the decoration with these items. It is important to introduce children to the character of each season by arranging readings of poetry and prose related to that particular season."

"The sixth activity that is helpful for sensitizing children about nature is to introduce them to the seasonal festivals that nature celebrates by itself. For example, every season has its own blossoms and colours of the crops grown during the period. Arrange picnics near the brilliant golden rice fields and where there is abundance of lotus flowers in the country ponds in autumn; 'flame of the forest' (*palaas*) and 'silk cotton' trees in bloom in spring. Picnics of this nature are a great source of joy to children. They love to wear clothes associated with particular seasons. Once a relationship of admiration, respect and love for nature is established in this manner, children will never lose their sensitivity and creative spirit. After all, it is nature that has provided the artist with all the ingredients for their creativity.

"At the end, it is suggested that schools may regularly organize annual festivals of arts and crafts. In these festivals every student will actively participate by contributing his or her own works of art, specially made

for the festival. No one's work should be left out, even if it is of a qualitatively lower level, for, it is more important that each student feels it to be his or her own festival. The display of all the art and craft work must be exhibited in good taste and a dignified manner. Programmes of dance, music and colourful processions will make the festivals richer and colourful. These festivals will have added importance and beauty if arranged during special seasons. For instance, in Bengal autumn would be the right season for it.<sup>2</sup> These words of the Master Artist emphasize that there is a close relationship between art and nature. Both can be better understood with the help of each other. Along with imparting educational experiences to the children, it will make the teacher aware of this kind of approach, and of the need for translating it into practice. To be able to guide children, teachers should saturate themselves in the spirit and the vision about which Nandalal Bose has spoken so clearly and effectively.

If over and above the approach towards artistic sensitivity elaborated by the Acharya, history of art is taught in a scientific manner, will surely help in art appreciation. But as it has already been stated, the way the subject of art appreciation is treated today, it will not help the child in developing the spirit of creativity and a sympathetic relationship with the world outside. The crucial point that needs to be repeated here is the necessity of an integration between intellect and aesthetic taste.

I want to add a few more suggestions to the above list. I have found an interesting and useful project for helping children develop a taste which is aesthetically sound as well as functional. The project is to initiate an interest in children to improve their school and classroom environment. Surest to one of the students, or a group of them, that they rearrange their art room or the classroom. They will first empty the room completely and then plan and work out the new arrangement. When it is all done, discuss the project with the whole class. Points to be discussed may be as follows: simplicity of arrangement, free movements choice of wall display, colour scheme, flower arrangement etc. Similar discussions may also be held after each celebration in the school.

How do you dispose of the waste material? The answer to this question can provide interesting information about the level of resourcefulness and creativity of a person or a social group. To make the point, I shall give two illustrations: one from Japan and the other of the tradition of making *kantha* (quilt) in Bengal. The Japanese have a good sense for using waste material such as cloth, bamboo and paper. It is amazing what beautiful dolls they can make from cut-pieces of cloth and wood waste; papier mache masks, and decorative objects from shredded waste paper; and from waste bamboo, items such as beautiful knives, spoons, on some of which they do artistic calligraphy.

Similarly, the art of making attractive *kanthas* and quilts from old and often torn sarees with beautiful needlework is an example of artistic and functional use of waste material by the women of Bengal. They may be considered illiterate by the so-called modern educators, but in reality those who can create beautiful objects are the educated people.

The finer awareness of beauty is enhanced by nurturing the power of imagination in the individual. I have known people with good taste taking interest in collecting what many would call funny, interesting objects from nature, such as old twisted and bent pieces or branches of trees, stones with unusual shapes from the seashore or mountains. "Collectors" of such items see interesting shapes and objects in such strange articles. I believe it would be a good training for stimulating the power of imagination, and therefore creativity. As seekers of new experiences all the time, children take much interest in such activities.

If carried out with discretion and a well defined objective, the popular practice of collecting pictures from newspapers and magazines can be a useful medium for developing the sense and skill for the understanding of several aspects of artistic creativity. I have observed a common flaw in this practice: the indiscrete and purposeless collection of prints of bad examples of art objects. (I am not mentioning here

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2. Nandalal Bose: 'Shilpakatha', from Collected Writings: *Drishti O Shrishti*, Vishwa Bharati Publications, Calcutta, p.11

anything about the hobby of collecting and displaying of pictures of cinema stars). Teachers have the responsibility of helping children to develop a sense of purpose and selectivity in the process of collecting art reproductions from newspapers and magazines. In our art section of the Sevagram school, we have been able to make a fairly comprehensive collection of prints of paintings of various schools, traditional as well as modern, of Indian and Western painting. One snag, rather a serious one, is about the quality of printing of the magazines.

However, even this "snag" can be "exploited" for bringing home to the students the facts about the correctness of colours and the sophistication required in the printing processes. Comparing an original work of painting with a magazine reproduction is often sufficient to explain to the students, the points to be noticed while selecting prints for their collections.

There can be two separate parts of the activity of collecting prints. The general one is concerned with the technical aspect of the educational programme. For instance, collecting pictures related to general knowledge regarding various subjects. Although the selection of pictures for this part of the activity does not require great aesthetic sense, restraint should be exercised in choosing only good photographs and diagrams.

The other part of this is directly related to art activities. It would, naturally, cover as many branches of art as possible, i.e. painting, sculpture, architecture, handicrafts, etc. The most important task of the teacher here is to create a good sense of selection of the right kind of art objects, i.e. selecting only those prints which give the truest possible impression of the original work. In other words, teachers themselves have to be trained and sophisticated enough to be able to choose the right examples.

I have a concrete suggestion in this regard. Whereas schools can make their own collections and also encourage children to make theirs, there ought to be some kind of centralized mechanism, through which sets of high quality art reproductions from all over the world, classical as well as modern, are always on the move, for exhibition in all the schools of the country. It is true that good quality prints are very expensive and difficult to keep in good shape for long. Therefore, it is all the more important that it has to be some kind of centralized programme, organized by the State and/or some educational trusts. In this way, teachers and students of all schools can have the opportunity to learn about the arts of the world, of all epochs. It would be a good example for the children to make their own collections.

In the education of children, art history and its principles are of no less importance than of the creation of art objects. A careful study of the great works of art is more effective than listening to a dozen lectures on it. But the point I am trying to make here is, that, for such a study the student ought to be psychologically prepared before he can be introduced to the subject. Its introduction to children before they reach the stage of adolescence can be a hindrance in the development of their creativity. But, at the same time, children's looking at great works of art should be treated in the same way as their looking at nature. i.e. with no intellectual objectives. It is only at the beginning of adolescence that the child is ready to consciously learn about art appreciation, and as to how human beings have been reacting to different situations, and how, and with what sort of techniques, they have tried to express their feelings.

The interest in collecting cuttings from newspapers and magazines can also help in the understanding of the principles of aesthetics applicable to our own culture. But it is not sufficient to know only about one's own culture. The world is a much smaller place today. Therefore, it is necessary that when the adolescent is ready to grasp a wider perspective, he or she should be introduced to the art of other cultures.

A proper understanding of art implies the feeling for beauty and the understanding of the principles involved, which also implies the widening of one's vision. In other words, developing a sympathetic feeling for the art of all humankind. After all, human needs and aspirations are common to the whole human race. When seen superficially, its various ways of experiencing joy may look different in different situations and cultures, but basically they all aim at creating beauty and attaining *aanandam* (joy, bliss).

According to their situations, various cultures have given different emphasis to different aspects at different times. But their ultimate objectives are the same. It is like the waves on the surface of the sea, which are different in size and shapes at different places and times, but the ocean at its deepest regions is the same—quiet and unshaken. Hence, it is essential that our educational ideals encompass the whole of humanity, which is an integral part of nature. It is only then that art appreciation will become a source of sympathy and love for humankind.

## Questions and Answers

In the book, we have tried to cover a wide range of the relevant aspects—theoretical as well as practical—of child art. Despite this, I have experienced that whenever some serious discussions were held with teachers, either at the teachers training institutes, in Sevagram or in other centres in the country, many questions were asked on specific points. Similarly, in the workshops held on the subject with participants from the educational field, some stimulating questions and doubts were raised. Parents and guardians of children also often expressed their feelings by asking practical questions.

In this chapter, I shall try to present a number of questions with brief answers. Wherever practical, I have given the reference of the section of the book where further clarification on that particular question can be found.

*1. There are some children in my class who are not able to tell stories clearly and by using adequate words. Will these children be able to express themselves more clearly through drawing and painting?*

Yes! There are some experiences that can be expressed better through the medium of art. The first language children acquire is of visual forms. Hence, art is a very effective medium for self-expression.

*2. In our school, the art teacher keeps a leaf or a ball in front of the children and asks them to draw it. Is it a good practice?*

No! It is not a good practice

*3. May we ask children to draw from memory?*

It is good to do so. After all, whatever children draw on their own is always based on their memory.

*4. Generally, children do not have the sense of third dimension.*

Their pictures do not give any indication of distances or the third dimension. Is it not desirable to give them this sense?

It is normal that children do not have the sense of "perspective". But they do have the sense of distance in their own way. Their sense of "perspective" is mental and not visual. Although at the age of eleven or so they are ready to receive suggestions about the third dimension, it is not good to coax them into it. They will grasp it easily when the time is ripe. (chapter 7)

*5. Do you allow visitors in your class? Is it not distracting to children?*

The presence of visitors does create a disturbance. If it is unavoidable care must be taken to prevent the visitors from interacting with children, and be sure not to make them too conscious about the presence of the visitors.

*6. Does each of your classes consist of children of the same age group? Can children of different age groups work together in the same class?*

Yes, it is practical, provided the class has an atmosphere of freedom. However, one group can be of children of upto eight to nine years and the other of older ones. (chapter-7)

*7. What does it imply in terms of mental growth, if a child of five draws like a child of eight years of age? Is it abnormal?*

If a child of five draws like a child of eight, by general standards, he should be considered above average. It could either be on account of the environment the child lives in, or he has been taught to do better than others. In case because the child has not been taught, his being above average need not be

abnormal. If the general standard of a particular social group is comparatively low, there will always be some children from that group also, who would do better than others, (chapter 3)

*8. Is it good or necessary to shift a child from the medium of expression in which he or she is well versed to another medium?*

No, it is not. However, it is good for children to have experience of as many mediums as possible.

*9. Some parents often want their children to paint pictures as adults do. They even try to force them to go in that direction. How can these children be protected from that kind of situation?*

This is the task of adult education. Parents have to be made aware of children's natural ladder of growth and their real aesthetic needs, which can be fulfilled only by letting them reach their full and healthy development, (chapter 3 and 4)

*10. My three-year-old daughter splashes colours on sheets of paper. Is it all right? Should we not make her aware of the shapes of some articles or animals, which she can try to paint?*

What you think is "splashing colours" is in reality her painting activity. Those splashes are her "articles and animals". If you will allow her to grow naturally, her splashing of colours will develop into the process of painting "things" and "animals". But if she still continue to do it something has to be done to help her get out of that habit. (chapter 7)

*11. Upto what age should children be allowed to paint as they wish?*

There cannot be a hard-and-fast rule about it. Some children feel the need for help at a rather early age. There are some who go on doing their own work happily and successfully and they do develop well.

*12. Is it wrong to ask children to make pictures of specific objects?*

Sometimes it does become necessary to make such suggestions. Children who go on repeatedly painting the same picture, have to be helped in getting new ideas, (chapter 7)

*13. My four-year-old son always comes and asks me to draw an engine. He does not leave me unless I make a picture of a train for him. Is it the right thing for me to do? What impact would it make on his own pictures?*

There is no harm in doing that occasionally. But you should encourage him to make his own picture of a train. If possible, ask him to make one before you make one for him.

*14. What do you think of the illustrated books being published today with gaudy colours?*

No doubt children like colours, but to put colours indiscriminately and label the book as children's literature is totally wrong. It corrupts children's taste. The question of children's literature is a separate issue by itself. But in the context of your question I can only emphasize that children's books should be made with good aesthetic sense. (appendix three)

*15. There is a notion that books on alphabets in many colours make them attractive and easier for children to learn the alphabet. Does it make sense?*

Teaching the alphabet and making books colourful and attractive are two different subjects. Although our subject just now is not of teaching alphabets, I must emphasize that the notion that books for teaching alphabets should be colourful because it makes them easier for children to learn is unscientific.

*16. There are three children in my class who do not make their own pictures. They always copy from other children. How can I prevent them from doing so?*

True, educationally, copying is not helpful. It is wrong. We should try to prevent children from copying, but very gently and cautiously. It may help to give them different seats in the classroom, though that too is a sensitive matter. These children should not feel that they are being punished for copying. Teachers have to realize that some children do have less imagination or inclination to look for new topics for their

pictures. Although copying is harmful for healthy growth, it is also true that some children learn, or can learn, only by imitating, at least at the beginning stage. (appendix one)

17. *Some children, who generally make their own paintings, also copy from one another occasionally. Is that wrong too?*

There is no harm in it, as long as it is a matter of mutual exchange.

18. *Sometimes, I am unable to catch the idea of children's paintings. Is it wrong to ask the child to explain it?*

Children like to describe the contents of their pictures. The story the child tells about the picture is another effective means of self-expression. Some children also like to write about their pictures. There is nothing wrong in asking a child about his picture; but you should not be insistent about it. After all, the child has already expressed what he or she wanted to communicate through the picture. He will respond to your question only if there is something more to communicate. Teachers should try to understand the mind of the child. The more experience the teachers gain about children's minds, the more they will be able to grasp the meanings without asking the child artists. Psychologists try to understand not only the meaning of the pictures, but also try to go deeper into the child's personality.

19. *Is it advisable to give several colours to younger children at the same time? What kind of brushes should be given to them?*

It has been observed that children use only a few colours at a time, even if they have many available. It is therefore advisable that they be given five or six colours at a time. Brushes which are ordinarily available, are good enough. Very fine (thin) ones are not good; using such brushes does not allow the child to be bold enough. Ordinarily, the middle-orange-size brushes are adequate, but when making large pictures, thicker brushes will be required.

20. *What should we do if a child leaves a picture incomplete and does not want to complete it in the next class?*

Children should complete the picture they have started to paint. You ought to encourage the child to complete it even after a gap of more than one period. Leaving work incomplete is not a desirable habit. However, it has been observed that children generally do like to complete their pictures, (chapter 7)

21. *Which is more important for the teacher to have: art techniques or the knowledge the mind and mentality of children?*

For giving art experience to children it is not essential for the teacher to be an expert in the technical aspects of art. In fact, my experience has convinced me that a teacher who understands the child, and is sympathetic to his needs, is better suited to help children in their art activities, than one who might be a very good artist but does not understand childhood, (chapter 6)

22. *What kind of impact do book illustrations make on children?*

As far as providing certain kinds of information is concerned, book illustrations can be, helpful, but generally these, being made in cheap taste, can be a bad influence on the child's aesthetic taste. In such cases, a good teacher will try to convey to the child the message that there is no relationship between his own art work and the illustrations in their books. To my mind, a better solution is to use children's art work in illustrated books. And, better still, encourage them to write and illustrate their own books. (chapter 2 and appendix three)

23. *Do you sometimes ask children to make drawings of particular objects?*

Rarely! Do it only when a child is unable to think of a subject on his own. I do not insist that children make pictures or models of things that we, the adults, see in front of us. (chapter 7)

24. *Some children splash colours without having an idea or intention to make pictures. In such a situation will you not ask them to stop splashing and draw pictures?*

Splashing colours is not unusual. The child does it to acquaint himself with the material, in this case, colours and brushes. If this activity lasts a bit too long, it may be due to the child not having fresh experiences which he would like to communicate to others. Carefully made suggestions should help, or better still, provide him with some direct experience to stimulate his imagination and motivate him to paint.

*25. What is the harm in copying good pictures?*

Copying is wrong for children. Copying good pictures may not be as harmful as copying pictures with cheap taste, distorting the child's aesthetic taste. Moreover, it is difficult, if not impossible, for an average teacher to be able to discriminate between good and bad pictures. (appendix one)

*26. Why don't you allow children to learn from the work of great masters?*

We should accept the principle that the influence of adult art destroys the natural quality and spontaneity of children. They have plenty of time to learn from great masters. They will start learning from them in a healthier manner from the time they enter the world of the adult. It will then be more natural and helpful. I am not denying the need for children to be exposed to good work.

*27. Do children feel satisfied with their own pictures, even though they are not realistic?*

Works of child art are never realistic. The child almost always feels happy with his work.

*28. My child is quite intelligent, but his paintings are not that good! Would it be wrong to say that the more intelligent a child is the more beautiful his picture will be?*

Yes, it would be wrong. Intellectual and artistic faculties, in other words, logical skills and creativity, are two different qualities. It is a common observation that "some less intellectually inclined children" draw better than many with high intellectual skills. The reality is that people take different paths to reach their goals of life.

*29. Do art activities-provide contentment to the natural instincts of children?*

Art expression is the outlet to most natural instincts and internal needs in a sublimated form.

*30. Children of poor families do better in art compared to those of the rich. Why?*

It is not always so. However, we should realize that on account of their circumstances, the poor remain closer to nature. Hence, their art expression is more natural and spontaneous. That makes the difference.

*31. I am a class teacher of children of seventh grade, who have been with me since they were in the fourth grade. I have observed that as these children have grown older, their pictures have been gradually losing their liveliness and spontaneity. What have you to say about it?*

At the time of entering adolescence, children start looking at the world as adults do. It is the time when they move from childhood to adulthood. To a great extent, the confused state of aesthetics in today's society is responsible for giving a defeatist attitude to the adolescent in regard to his art expression. If the necessary perspective toward the education of the adolescent can be developed, the so-called "stage of crisis" during the changeover from childhood to adulthood could prove to be a very creative period, (chapters 3 and 4)

*32. Why are parts in children's pictures larger than they are in reality? For instance, in most of their pictures the head is almost as large as the rest of the body.*

Children do not paint the objective reality. Their pictures depict their inner reality. They paint what they know and not what they see. The subject and size of objects in children's paintings depends on the importance they attach to them. The item that attracts them most becomes larger in proportion. Isn't that the same in many of the old masterpieces? For instance, in the paintings of Ajanta, the Buddha is painted many times larger than the ordinary people.

*33. Do you prefer to give various mediums to children in the same group at the same time, e.g. painting, clay modelling and pottery etc.?*

Yes, generally we do. I have observed that different children like to do different activities at a particular moment. Some like to paint, some like pottery, others like to work with some other medium. There ought to be the freedom to choose from the various mediums available in the art class.

*34. When is the time for children to start painting in a realistic manner?*

Generally speaking, children start feeling the need for it on reaching the age of twelve. But to make it a hard-and-fast rule would be a mistake. Some children reach that stage considerably earlier than others, and some later, (chapter 7)

*35. When should the teaching of perspective begin?*

At a later stage, when the child feels its need. It should be started with the preliminary understanding of the third dimension, (chapter 7)

*36. Don't children copy those paintings you occasionally display in the art class?*

Children who continue receiving new experiences all the time, new ideas for their paintings, would not do it. When any of them does it, it is due to the absence of a new idea at that time or the subject in a particular picture has specially attracted him. Children who are comparatively backward in this respect, are more likely to imitate. We should not make a fuss about it. Who knows, this kind of imitation might give them an incentive to draw their own pictures in the course of time!!

*36. Would it not be good to teach children some perspective drawing? It might help them make better pictures.*

What you call a "better picture" may not be so for children. From the child's point of view, his painting without the element of perspective is "his own" work, and that is the real character of child art.

*38. What is the flaw in the idea of encouraging children to draw realistic pictures?*

Just imagine what kind of harmful effect it would have on the child by not allowing him to live in his own world. Making the child paint like adults would mean imposing on him the world of the adult, which would be against his natural growth. Making the child paint like the adult would be as bad as trying to mould the child into adulthood before he is ready for it. Painting realistic pictures is a part of the nature of the adult, not of the child.

*39. What do you mean by saying that art should be an integral part of all the activities of the child?*

It only means that all the activities of the child should promote creativity. Art and aesthetic sense should be the outcome of all his activities.

*40. If children are not taught the principles of perspective drawing, will they master it by themselves in due course?*

When the time comes, in its natural course, they start feeling the need for the knowledge of perspective. If at that time they receive proper help they will find it easier to learn it. (chapters 3 and 7)

*41. Does every child feel the need for learning perspective?*

Not necessarily. If the general aesthetic standard of a community is high and the taste of the people is good enough, the presence of perspective will not be an essential aspect of a good painting. Most of the best paintings of the classical periods in all the cultures do not indicate that. If our approach to art education is correct and the taste of the adults in the society is formed on the foundations of great art, children will not necessarily be inclined towards realism or achieving the three-dimensional character in their paintings. They may, most probably will, eventually learn the science of third dimension, i.e. the technique of perspective drawing, but that would be an integral part of their education as a whole, (chapters 3 and 7)

*42. Do children get joy in your class? Do they get the necessary entertainment?*

If that had not been the case why would they come to the class with so much enthusiasm? Haven't you seen that they start their work as soon as they enter the art class?

*43. Does art help children in the other subjects?*

Art is related to our visual experiences. Mental imagery is an essential part of the thinking process. Visual images are closely related to mental images. Art makes these images more clear and concrete. The experiential aspect of art helps one go deeper into the other elements of life. (chapter 7)

*44. Do children have some kind of competitive attitudes within their group?*

Today competition has become the second nature of man. It affects children also. Competition is not a gift of nature to children and they should be protected from it.

*45. Is it good to have a fixed time for the art class? Will it be better if they have complete freedom to go to the studio at any time they like?*

The best thing to do is to give them total freedom. If the educational atmosphere is endowed with creative imagination, as it is supposed to be, children will surely like it and gain much sensibility, a sense of proportion and responsibility. But, in the present situation, it is better to devote a good amount of fixed time for art education rather than not have it at all. (chapter 7)

*46. Which size of pictures do children like to make? Large or small!*

You cannot make a rule about it.

*47. If the sense of colour is natural in man, why then should there be any disharmony of colour in the work of most adults?*

Today, there is disharmony not only in the art work of adults, there is disharmony in every aspect of their lives.

*48. What do you do when a child, cannot think of a subject for his picture?*

Encourage the child by giving suggestions, by telling a story or by giving some concrete experience, (chapter 7)

*49. Should children be given the best quality tools, brushes and colours etc.?*

It is not necessary at all to go in for expensive material. Nevertheless, they should be appropriate. All the material you give to children should fulfil the needs of their art expression. Tools made by the teacher in the class can be as good as those bought from the shops dealing with school equipment (chapter 7)

*50. Should you instruct children to correct mistakes in using colours?*

What do you mean by mistakes? Is it when they spill colours on the floor or their clothes or face? If that is what you mean by mistakes, you should surely discourage them. But if they use colours according to their scheme, how can you call it a mistake?

*51. Don't children sometimes ask for help from the teacher?*

Children who are below average or have some physical or psychological problems do ask for help. A good teacher will give them support, which should not be in the form of teaching them how to draw or paint. What they need is support, trust and recognition.

*52. Is there difference between pictures made by boys and girls?*

Yes, there is. It is generally found that girls like to do more ornamental work than boys. But that could also be on account of the age-old conditioning.

*53. Is there any correlation between art and other activities in Nayee Talim schools, such as agriculture, crafts etc.? Are all the activities considered complementary to each other?*

In a truly correlated educational programme, all the activities will have to be complementary to each other. Art should become the lifeline of all the activities, (chapter 5)

54. *Art gives expression to the child's imagination. Does it also stimulate and enhance his power of imagination?*

Yes, it does. (chapter 2)

55. *What should be done if a child continues to paint the same picture over and over again?*

A child in my class has been drawing the same objects for the last one month. He starts drawing from the top left-hand corner of the paper something which looks like a flying bird. After filling up half of the sheet with similar images in about fifteen minutes, he switches on to some other kind of play. What am I do to help him? His continuing to repeat the same picture for a long time is because he is not getting new experiences. In such a situation, it is important that the child gets some striking experiences. New pictures will come out from his head only after being impressed by something fresh and powerful. Put the child in a situation that will make a strong impression on him. That should help. (chapter 7)

56. *It has been accepted that at the age of fifteen or so, children's creativity weakens, disappears or changes in character. What kind of activities can take the place of art?*

At that stage, children should be given opportunities to use different art mediums and encouraged to take up creative crafts. It will depend on the future inclinations of the child, especially in regard to the choice of profession, (chapter 7)

57. *Do you put clay work in the same category? Does clay modelling have the possibility for self-expression?*

Yes.

58. *What is the difference between making objects in clay and in wood? Can carpentry be considered a means of self expression?*

Each medium has its own character. Objects made in a medium will imbibe the character of that particular medium. Tools used are different for different mediums. Hence there will be a difference. No doubt, carpentry has great potential as a means of self-expression. However, small children find it difficult to use carpentry tools. They could also be dangerous.

59. In your class I have noticed children doing alpana. Can they make the same kind of decoration on paper?

They do such decorative work on paper also. But alpana on the floor has its own relevance, (chapter 7)

60. *You do arrange exhibitions of great masters' work on the walls of your art class. Does it not influence the work of children? Do children look at these painting with interests?*

Small children do not look at these paintings as paintings put up to be exhibited. If they see something interesting in them, they spend a little time looking at them, otherwise they go back to their own creative work. Some older children may get influenced by them.

61. *Is it preferable that the children paint their pictures on the basis of personal experience and imagination? How can you prevent children from being influenced by the work of adults?*

Children should paint from their own experience. It is not easy to keep children free from adult influence, particularly as most adults today do not understand Child Art, and they try to force their own ideas on children. It is, therefore, a matter of adult education. The first thing for adults to understand is that, for their natural growth, children should be encouraged to paint as expected from them, as children. Adults should not judge a child's work by their own standards. If that happens half the battle will be won.

62. *From which stage should children take to activities such as lino-cut and stencil work?*

Start whenever the child is able to use the tools for these activities, (chapter 7)

63. All the teachers of our school have read your article entitled "illustrated books for children". Do you think that such literature can be produced on a large scale? If it is possible, for which age group will it be?

As far as possible, children's literature ought to be related to the local culture and situation. Children of older groups can produce such literature for the younger ones. If such a tradition can be formed, the school itself will be producing enough literature for children. Literature produced at such a level will prove to be more effective and economical. Many more good pictures will be available for the selection of book illustrations. This kind of literature should be available for all age groups, (appendix three)

64. It seems you are visualizing a time when literature prepared and illustrated by children will replace children's text-books. How useful will that be?

In Nayee Talim, we do not have things called text-books. Nevertheless, there ought to be an ample amount of literature for children. As many books as possible should be illustrated. And, the more illustrations made by children are used, the better it will be. It does not mean that all the literature prepared for children should be made by children. Some will have to be prepared by experts. The use of good photography and the works of great masters are also recommended. However, I give the greatest importance to literature prepared by children themselves. (appendix three)

65. My eight-years-old son thinks that my painting of a house is better than the one he made. He thinks that his mother's work is good and her lines are neatly drawn. What should I do about it? How can you say that children like the pictures made by children more than those made by adults?

Generally speaking, children have a sort of hero-worship for their mothers. It may also be that your son has been influenced by adults' approach. It is very difficult today to keep children free from that influence. However, if adults have a genuine regard for the child's work, and if the child is confident that his mother likes his paintings, the work done by you will not create harmful influences.

66. Whenever my two children get a chance to see a train, they observe different parts of its engine very carefully. After returning home, they make pictures of the train engine. They discuss each other's pictures and suggest corrections. It is true, though, that they do not see every part of the engine very carefully. What is the reason behind it?

Children see only those things which attract them, and they make pictures of only those things. They discussed may be the differences which they must have noticed in each other's pictures. If you think that their not drawing those objects which you might have noticed carefully is a flaw in their pictures, it is not their mistake. It is your mistake to think in that manner.

67. A child made a drawing depicting a man being put on gallows to be hanged. What do you think was in that child's mind? What could be his feeling behind it?

That thought must have made a deep impression on the child's mind. It was probably an outlet for his aggression against someone or a feeling of pity or fear. (chapter 2)

68. Is it all right to allow children to draw such pictures, e.g. of hanging? How do you prevent it?

Yes, let children draw such pictures if they wish. If their aggression or fear does not get an outlet in this manner they might find some other manner which may be harmful. Such self-expression is useful for liberating the child's mind from stress, (chapter 2)

69. Should we make suggestions of ideas or objects for painting to a child if his power of imagination is weak?

Yes, it is sometimes necessary, (chapter 7)

70. Is it advisable to encourage children to discuss and compare their work among themselves? Do you think that the kind of art classes that schools generally have are harmful for children?

Yes, mutual criticism of their pictures is helpful. Those classes you are referring to, if not harmful, are certainly useless, for the simple reason that they help neither aesthetic growth nor the art skills of children.

*71. At which stage in life is it recommended for all the educated people to start learning to draw correctly, according to the principles of perspective drawing?*

If people receive the right kind of art education from early childhood, the skill you are talking about will be imparted in the natural course of the individual's development. If an adult is unable to draw in that manner and needs to do so for his work, it is highly recommended that the process of learning should start right from today!

*72. What is the relationship between the arts of children and adults?*

For practical purposes, none.

*73. In general, people do not have any regard for pictures made by children. Why?*

Leaving aside the question of children's art, just tell me how much regard are children given as individuals?

*74. Can parents help in their children's art activities?*

Yes, they can very much help by encouraging them and by learning to respect their work. (chapter 7)

*75. Children hesitate to paint on large sheets of paper. How can we liberate them from this hesitation?*

Slowly, gradually, and with lots of patience.

*76. Some children like to do ornamental work e.g. pattern making. Should they be totally free to do that kind of work?*

If it is due to the child not getting new ideas and experiences, it is surely not desirable. In that case the child should be encouraged and helped with ideas, without making him too conscious about it and creating some kind of complex in his mind. However, there may be some children who are particularly talented in ornamental work. They should be helped to further their skills in that field.

*77. When do children ask you for help in drawing pictures?*

They ask for help at the early stages. But when they realize that I do not give direct help in painting their pictures, they stop doing so. They realize that they have to learn to be independent.

*78. Is it recommended that children should first practice to draw with pencil only?*

No, it is not recommended. Children are very close to nature and need to experience every aspect of it — colour, form and movement—right from the beginning.

*79. Do you classify children according to their age or their skills?*

Classification should be done on the basis of skills and mental growth. However, if there is a big age gap, older children should not be placed with much younger children.

*80. Wouldn't children learn by imitating pictures published in journals?*

No. they will not. In fact, it will be harmful.

*81. Some children's books published in the West have line drawings, in which they are expected to fill up colours for practising to paint. Do you recommend them?*

I do not encourage it at all. Although nowadays many children like to do it, they do so on account of their parent's ignorance of childhood and its real needs. Children ought to be encouraged to paint their own pictures, (appendices one and two)

*82. According to you, children should not be taught art. Instead, they should be allowed to paint as they wish. Would it make the teacher's work easier?*

Instead of becoming easier, the teacher's task will be more difficult. "Teaching" generally implies: Show how to do it. Hold the child's hand and direct it according to your plan. And you think you have taught the child how to draw pictures. But the method we believe to be the correct one requires the teacher's attention at every stage of the child's development, without giving directions about "How to do it", (chapter 7)

83. I see many difficulties in this method. Where will you find such sensitive and skilled teachers? If such teachers are not available, we should train those who have interest in this work. They should be given relevant knowledge and experience about childhood. If you are unable to find such teachers why do you, then, think and talk of education?

84. *How do you examine children's work?*

Who are we to examine them! There is no sense in using the system of examination papers. Children's day-to-day work itself is their examination. If they are happy and engaged in making new pictures they are successful.

85. *You have said that the child should be allowed to do art work as much as he likes. This is not possible in the school time-table. What then shall we do?*

The school time-table should not be mechanical. It should have plenty of flexibility, (chapter 7)

86. *A child makes a picture in which there is no meaning. Do you think we should ask the child about his thought behind making that picture?*

There is no harm in asking the child this question. In fact, it is good to do so, because it might help in his thinking process. But you should not be insistent about getting the answer.

87. *If a child uses wrong colours, for instance, mauve or red for trees, should we not ask him to correct himself?*

The tree in nature is different from the tree of the artist's imagination. The real search is for joy and not for so-called correct imitation of nature. It is his poetic imagination. Who can correct it! (chapter 3)

88. *Is it not a possibility that the child might be colour blind?*

By and large it is a rare phenomenon. Until now, I have had only one such case. But it is a possibility.

89. *Do you give more importance to the intellect being predominant in art work?*

No, I don't. There are two types of artists. One is intellectual and the other intuitive. There is no hierarchical distinction between them. The child's work is not intellectual.

90. *If the approach on, and practice of, art of all the schools becomes as you suggest, will we have more artists in our country?*

Rather than having a large number of artists in the country, it is more important to assure a fuller and balanced personality development of the average citizen, which is possible only if all the schools give art its due importance and practice its teaching honestly and efficiently. It will make the public at large more understanding about art and the artist.

91. *Everybody will not become an artist, but will it produce more and better craft-persons out of those who had the opportunity of working with clay or wood, etc. during childhood? Will everybody be able to learn good craftsmanship?*

It will build the spirit of good craftsmanship which we miss so much today. The average person's capacity for using tools and gaining skills will be enhanced. The kind of art education we are asking for will also help in developing a technical approach among the population.

92. *Will proper art education help the child to understand his natural environment?*

It will not only help to understand nature, but will also give the spirit and capacity of feeling along with it. Today, the process is just the opposite. The older the individual grows, the farther away he shifts from nature. Art education will reverse this process, (chapter 1)

93. *Yesterday, you had mentioned that a large proportion of adults do not have awareness of many things around them. Does art education create awareness in children?*

One of the most important aspect of art education is awareness. It actually means identifying oneself with the environment, (chapter 1)

94. *Is embroidery a. part of art education?*

Yes, it can be.

95. *Is the aspect of rhythm common to both music and paintings?*

To a very great extent.

96. *What do you do when a child wants only to copy?*

I leave him alone that day. Children should be given a chance to realize that copying is of little meaning or importance. It is only then that he will start thinking.

97. *Does this kind of art education develop good taste in children?*

Yes, it does. We assume that the child's educational environment is charged with good taste. Hence, the art education we are asking for will be considered of the right kind.

98. *Will the creativity of the children be long lasting if he received the right guidance from early childhood?*

We hope that it will not only last longer, but also be of enhanced quality.

99. *If a child continues having the opportunity for art expression from early childhood, will he automatically develop the sense of proportion?*

If the development of the child has been according to the principles of his natural ladder of growth, he will automatically imbibe the sense of proportion.

100. *Do you exhibit the work of children in your art class? Do you display all the good and bad pictures?*

I try to exhibit all the good ones and make sure that every child has his or her picture(s) on the wall. I do not leave any one out.

101. *If a child has made a very good picture, should we make a point of showing it to all the children?*

All the children of the group should see everyone's pictures, but no child should think that he or she is considered specially good.

102. *How and when do you help the child who you find to be weak in creative power?*

By telling stories, giving descriptions, and by showing good examples of art objects. More importantly, by giving assurance of my respect for his personality.

103. *How can we improve the taste of people in whose houses we see pictures made in bad taste hung on the walls?* Throw away all those pictures and replace them with good ones.

104. *What can be done to improve the taste of adults?*

Start the treatment from early childhood and introduce this kind of art education in every section of the society. It is the task of adult education.

105. *Do you find the creativity of the child manifesting itself in the craft work which he may do in later life?*

If the child's creative spirit and skills are nurtured properly during his growing years, it should have a lasting impact on his craftsmanship.

106. *Isn't joy the greatest outcome of the child's art activities?*

Not only joy but also the fuller development of the child's personality.

107. *If children are taught reading and writing from the very early years of their lives, would it come in the way of their artistic activities?*

As you know, according to the principles of Nayee Talim, children should be encouraged to learn reading and writing only after they are six years of age. Teaching reading and writing at such an early age becomes a heavy burden on children, even if they do not realize it themselves. Naturally, it would be a greater strain on them if art activities were also forced on them in addition to the compulsory reading and writing.

108. *Children like to show their work to adults and want to hear their praise. Do you think we should admire the picture even if it is not good?*

According to the principles related to child art, it is not a mistake to tell a child in a supportive spirit that it is not as good as he thinks, (chapter 6 and appendix two)

109. *Do you try to change the habit of left-handedness?*

What is wrong in using the left hand?

110. *You must have experienced that not all the children want to do art work. They would rather go and climb trees. What do you do with them?*

That is not my experience. But whenever some children want to go and climb trees, I let them. This, by the way, does not happen very often. I wish all the schools had lots of trees in their compounds.

111. *Should there be a blackboard in the art room?*

More than one if you can manage it. And also coloured chalk, so that children can make large pictures, (chapter 7)

112. *Teachers may not give practical help to children for their drawings, but their support and sympathy should always be available. How do you do it in practical terms?*

By making adequate arrangements for art material and extending all the possible facilities; and by expressing respect and sympathy towards them and their work.

113. *The task of education is to keep children on the right path. If you do not correct their mistakes, how will they learn?*

When you say that the task of education is to keep children on the right path, you are implying that children, by nature, take to wrong paths. The real error is in that very attitude. What we need today is to understand that children, by nature, tend to choose the creative path; and therefore, the effort of education should be to keep all the creative faculties of children alive and active. The path of childhood is that of fearlessness, truth and promptness. He expresses all these in his art activities, but we call them errors. They are, often, their ornaments and not mistakes, (chapter 7)

114. *Suppose the teacher does his work on these very principles, and children's art classes operated in an ideal manner. What impact would it have on the other twenty-three hours of the child's day?*

The task of education should encompass all the twenty-four hours of the day. Wherever it is not possible, and today it is a rarity, having only one hour would have a proportionate effect on the lives of children. We should be thankful for it, as it is better than having no time at all available for art activities. If that hour is spent correctly and creatively, it will have some good results.

*115. If the child is to be given all the possible creative opportunities, is it not crucial that the education of the parents and teachers receive more attention?*

No doubt, it should be so. But we cannot wait for the parents and teachers to be adequately educated before taking up the question of child education. Both the efforts should go on simultaneously. One of the centres of adult education should be the education of children.

## Illustrations

### Colour Illustrations

Age in years and months

B = Boy

G = Girl



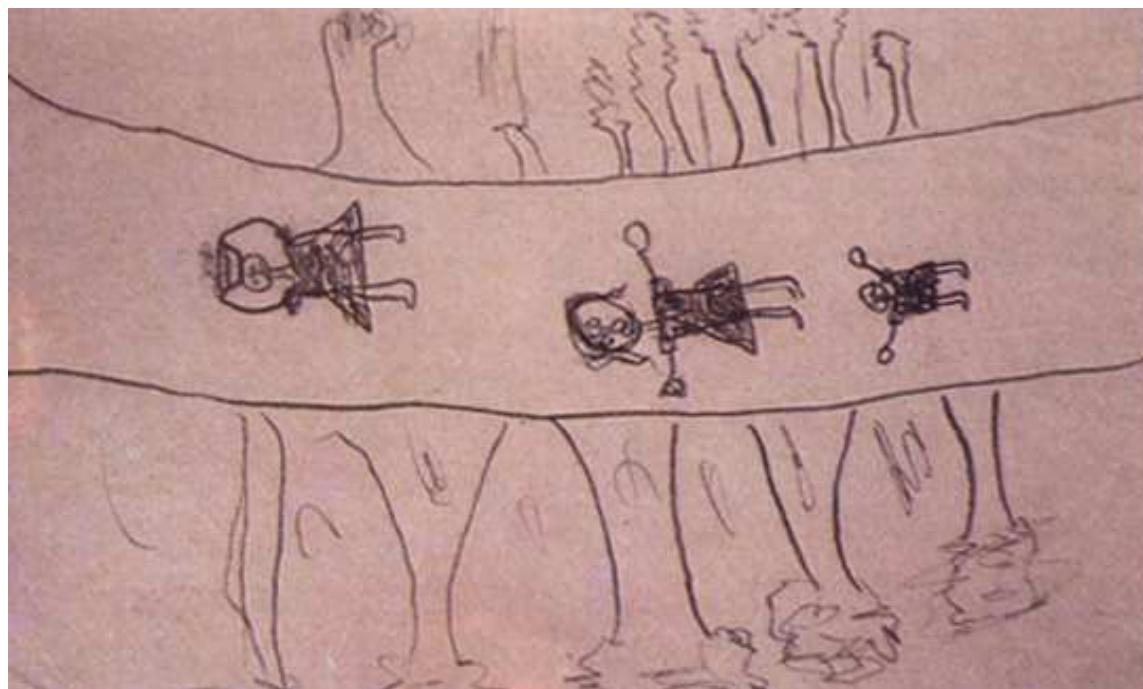
1. Lights of Wardha 5 B

The shinning night lights of the town, Wardha, are visible from Sevagram. Before he started drawing this picture, the artist announced his plan to make such a picture.

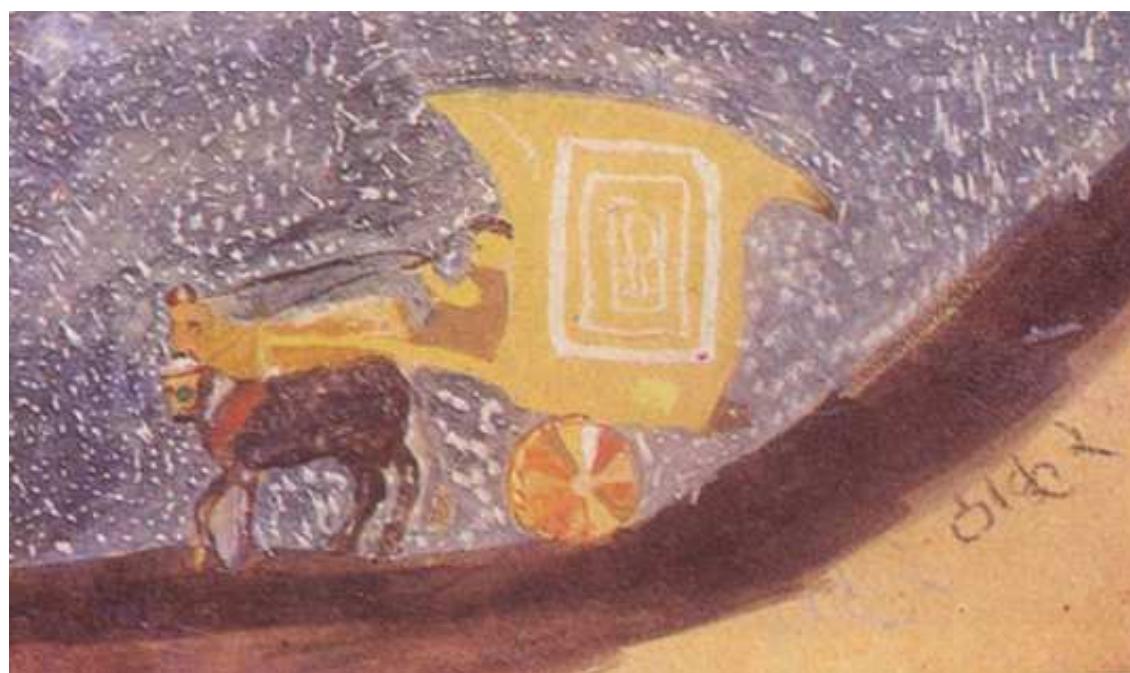


2. I and my parents 6 B

By suggesting subjects for painting when the child is unable to think of anything, the teacher can awaken the imagination of the child, and also get a glimpse into his mind.



3. Men walking on the road 6.4 B  
(chapter three)

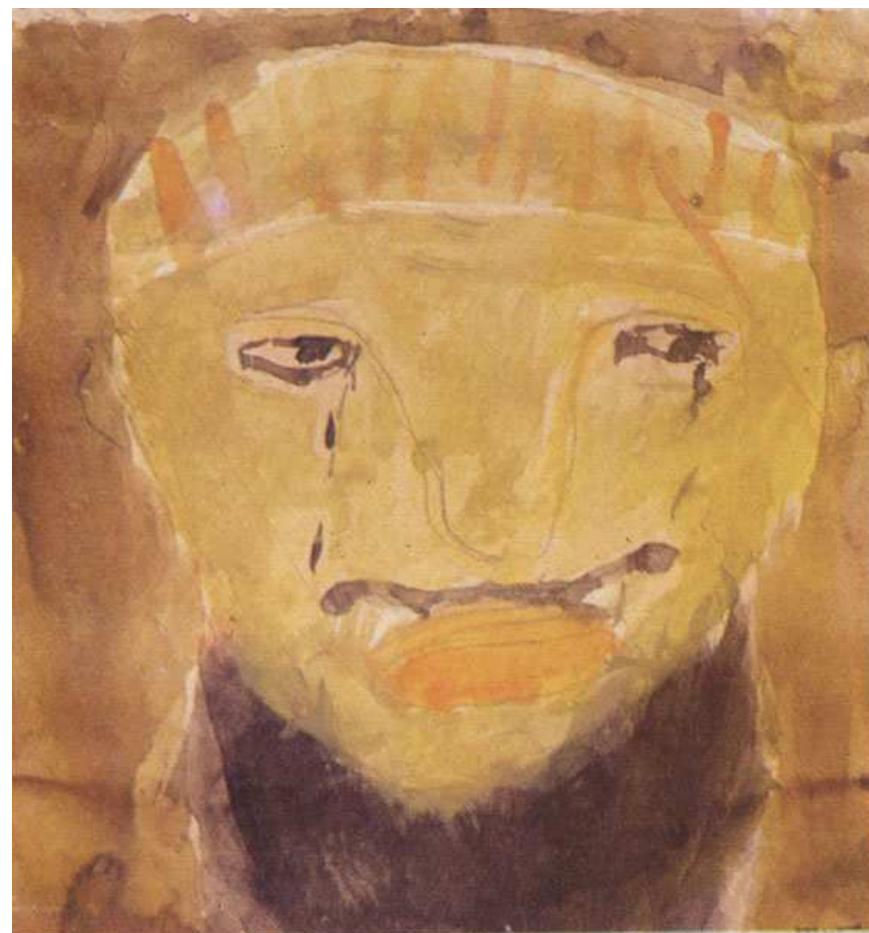


4. Chariot 11 B  
This child talked very little, but always kept a small drawing book with him. Much of his self-expression was through drawing and painting.



5. The teacher 11 B

At this stage, the child has no hesitation, hence the picture retains its strength.



6. Poor Man 11.8 B

This child was of a somewhat morose nature. He had an unusual choice of colours. For instance, he had no problem in using green for the face of the “poor man”



7. No title 11.6 B

Very often the nature and aptitude of children become known from the subject of their pictures. This is a good example.



8. First the teacher, then us 12 B

Suggestions for the picture depicting "an activity of our art class", provided this child an idea for this picture. He was unable to think of anything before the suggestion was made.



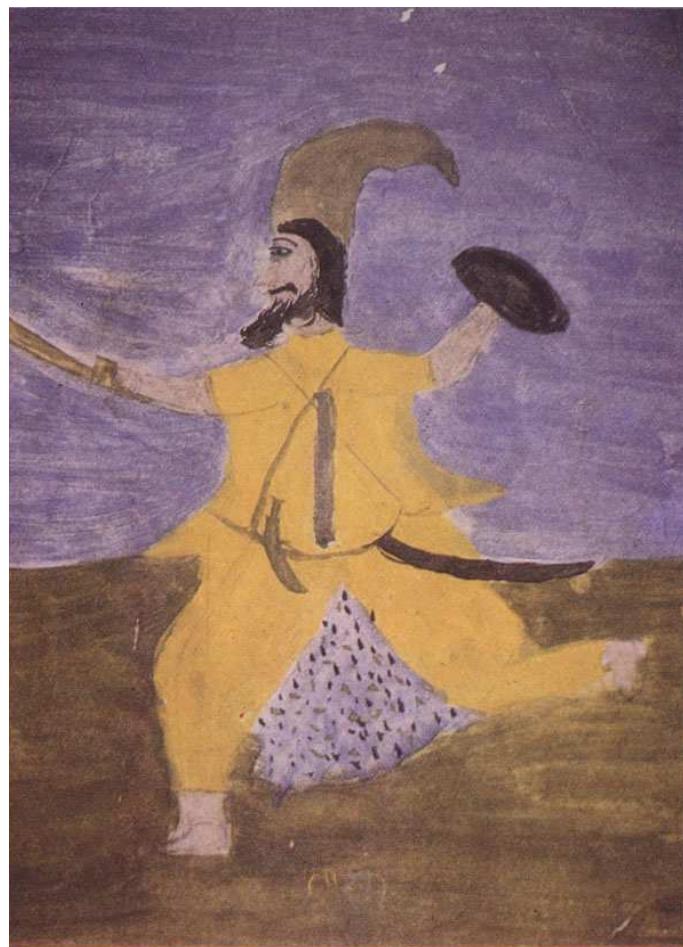
9. Parrot and tiger 12 B

This child was weak physically as well as mentally, and was always complaining. The subject of this picture is: A parrot is pestering the tiger with its beak. It is likely that this sad looking tiger is the child himself and the parrot all the children who, he thinks, pester him.



10. Bird 12 B

While painting this picture, the child-artist must have had some concrete idea about the colours to be used. He tried several combinations before reaching the final result, which he brought to show me with great enthusiasm.



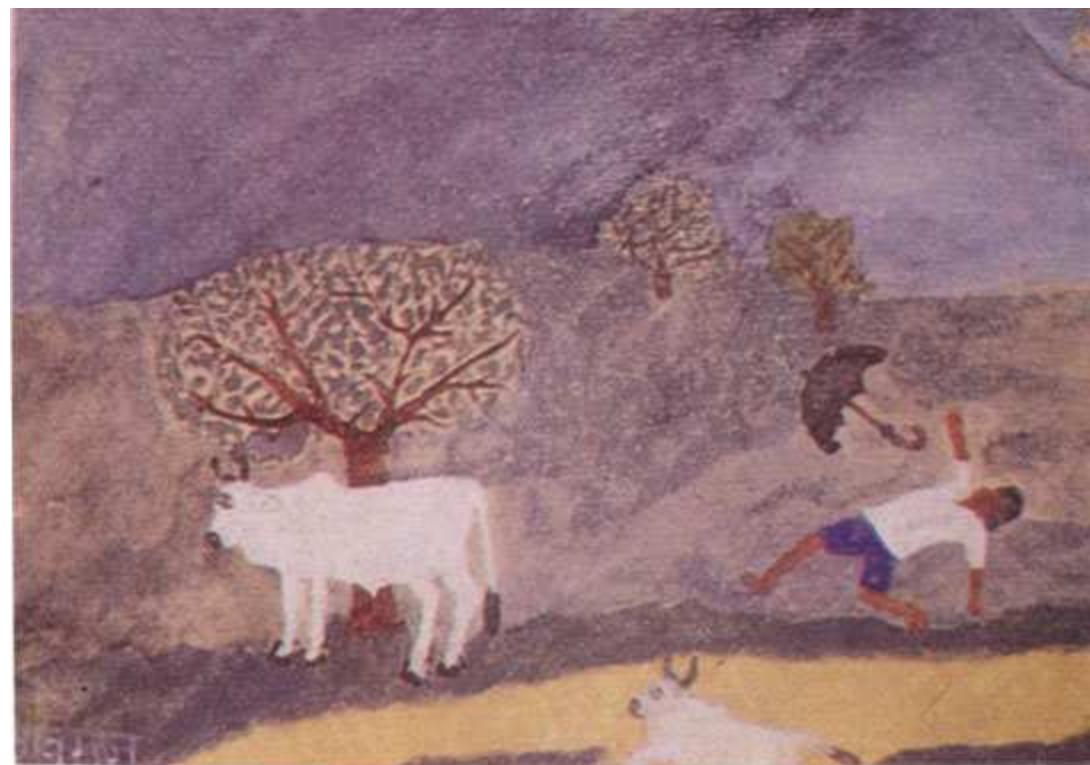
11. Shivaji 12 B

A clear example of the advent of the stage of realism. The use of fine brush lines to paint the beard is worth noticing in this connection.



12. Lord Krishna 12.6 G

She was an intelligent child with special interest in ornamental aspects of painting.



13. A rainy day 12.6 B  
For details please see the chapter: The Children's Angle.



14. Milking cow 13 G  
Although she was thirteen, her mental age was not more than 10-11 years. However, when she took to drawing and painting her growth became faster, and eventually she became the most admired child artist of Sevagram community.



15. When I fell into the well 13.6 B

While drawing water from the well, one day, this child actually fell into it. "How did you feel?" his classmates asked him. The next day he wrote an essay on his experience, entirely on his own. He painted this picture, with his falling body in blue colour, which must have been due to the terrifying experience he had at that time.



16. Autumn Festival 14 G

This child was the organizer of the festival and was keen student of dancing.



17. At my window 14.3 G

This child, though "backward", and disinterested in other subjects, was a very creative child-artist.



18. My village in summer 15 B

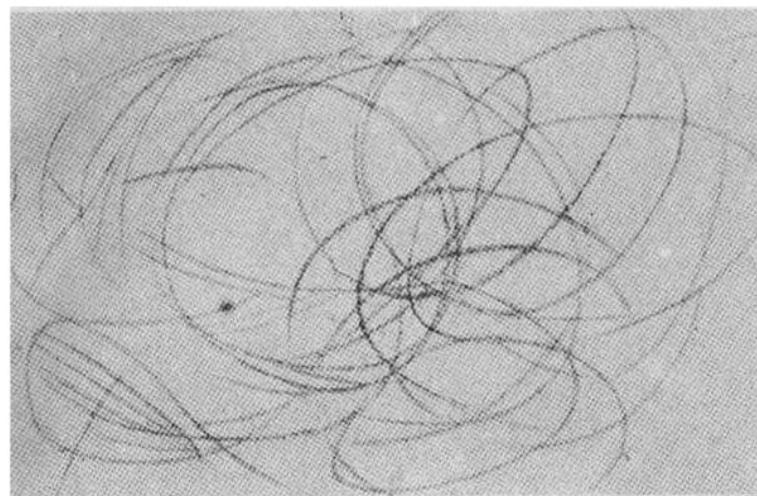
A successful effort at getting a realistic rendering of the summer atmosphere of the village.



19. Teacher's house G

This child was more inclined to do ornamental work.

***Black & White Illustrations***



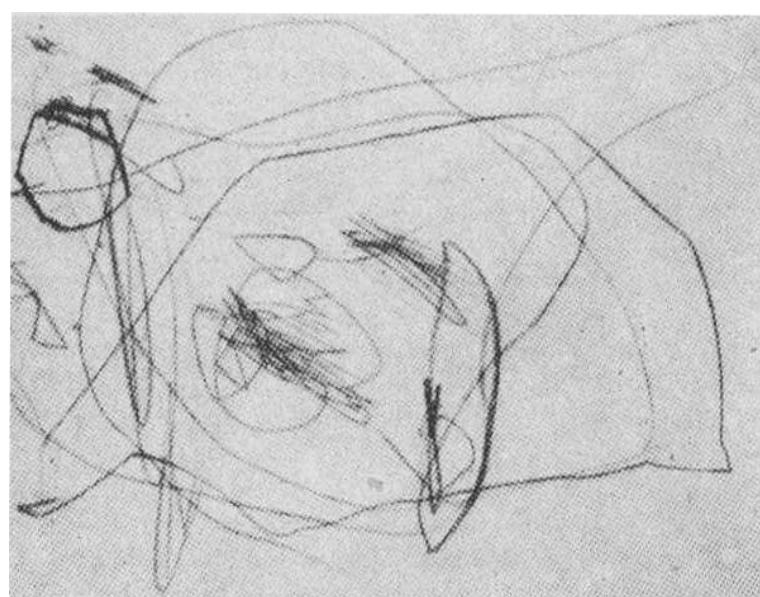
20. First scribblings 27 B

When the child is able to hold a pencil, and starts scribbling, he does it in circular movements, which is also a muscular exercise for him.



21. Introduction to tools 3.6 B

The child is trying to find out all that can be done with these items.



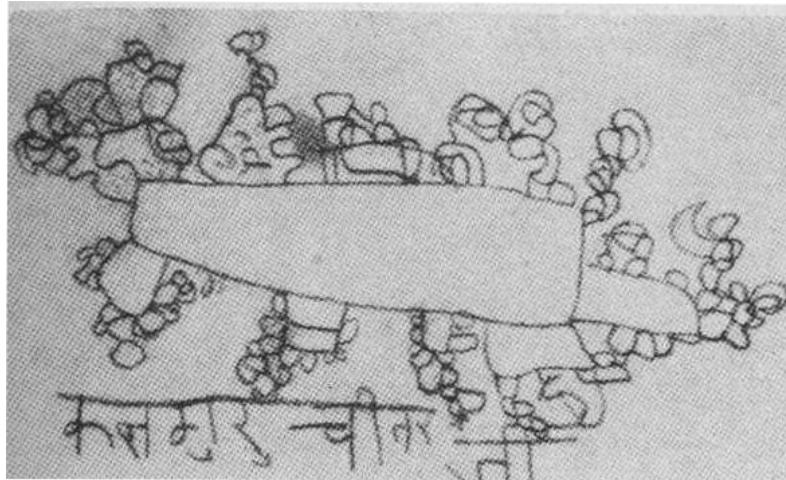
22. Muscular control 3 B

From circular to angular movements.



23. More control of muscular movements 3B

Instead of moving the whole shoulder, the child is beginning to control his wrist movements. He enjoys using more colours and moving his hands in various directions.



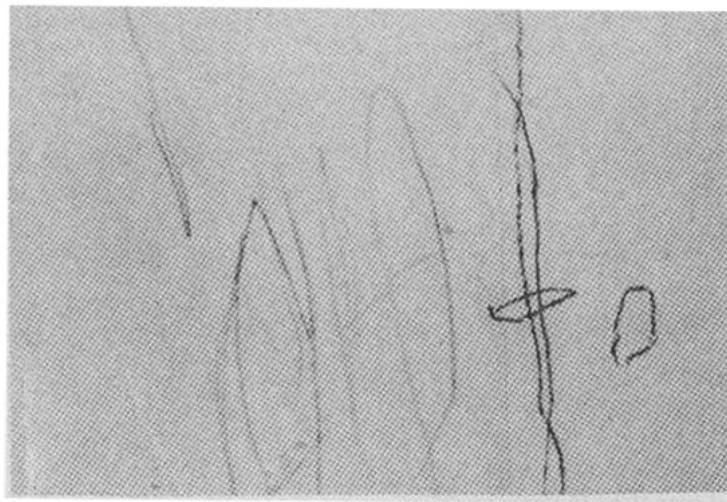
24. Playing with circular forms 4.6 G

The artist wrote on the picture to indicate that it was a gift to her art teacher.



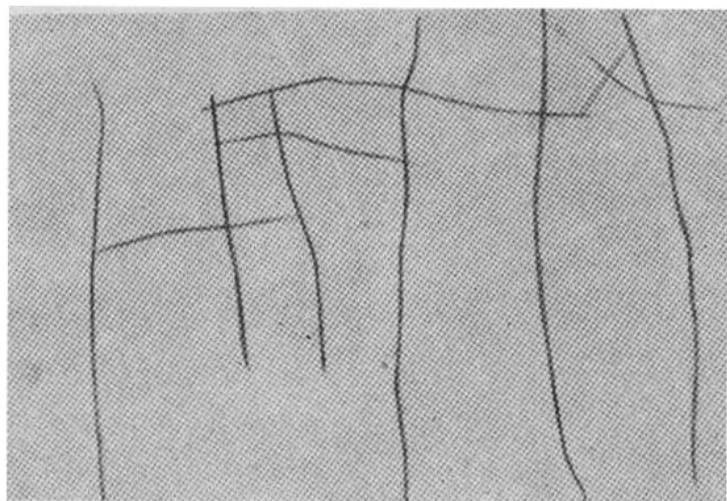
25. Horse 4 B

Whatever form his brush created with colours, the child gave it the name "horse".



26. Rama's Bow 4 B

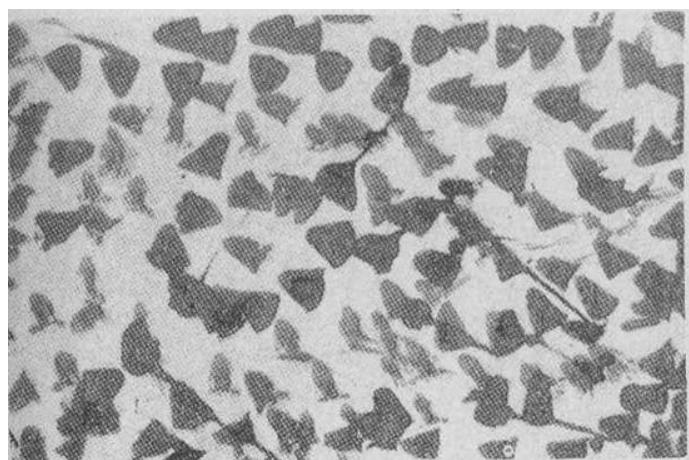
The child made this picture when the school community was having a sort of stage play from the epic *Ramayana*.



27. Man 4 B

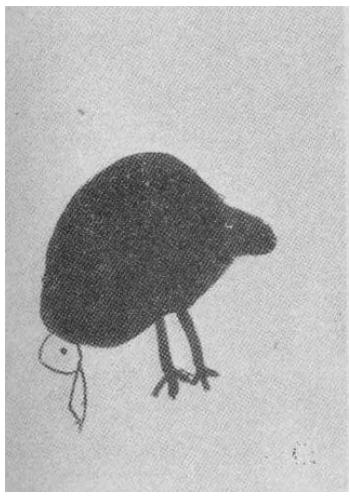
I saw this child enjoying drawing vertical lines with pencil. A little later he crossed these with horizontal lines.

Forms thus created became human figures.



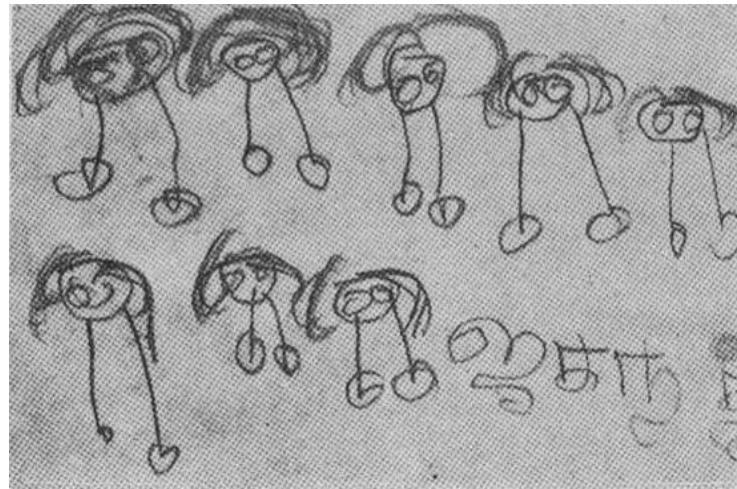
28. Starry night 5.3 G

As soon as the artist started painting this picture, it was evident that she had a clear theme worked out for her painting. It is the concrete beginning of the stage of symbols.



29. Bird 5 B

The symbol for the object of his pictures was clear in the mind of the artist before he painted it.



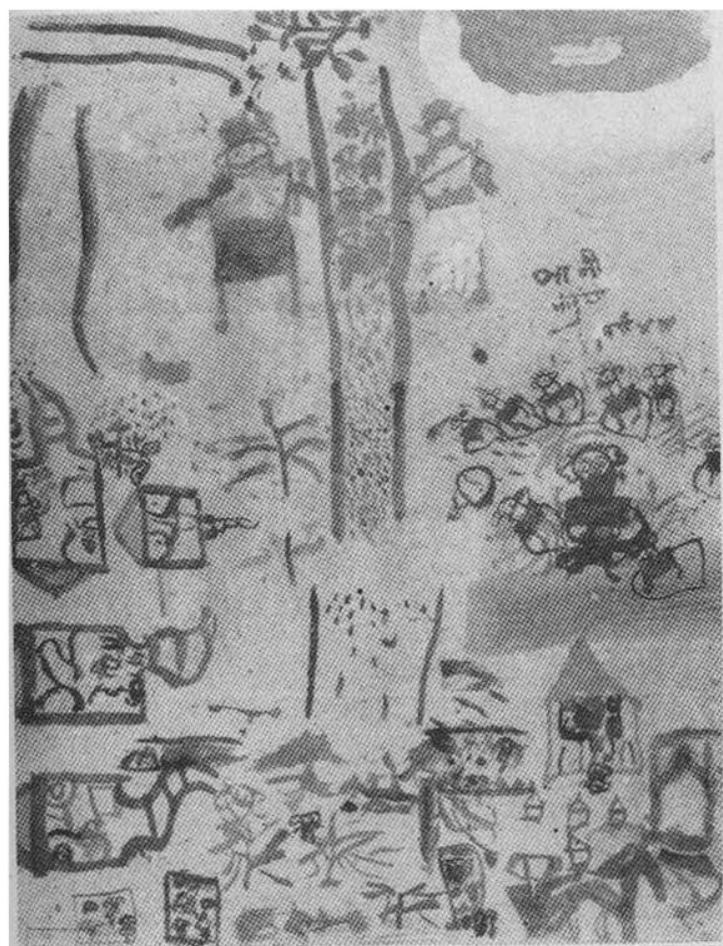
30. Man 6.6 B 31.

This child, from a school in Tamil Nadu, had just started to draw pictures. For the school too it was the first introduction to art as a curriculum subject.



31. Green shirt 6 B

This child was longing to have a green shirt for himself.



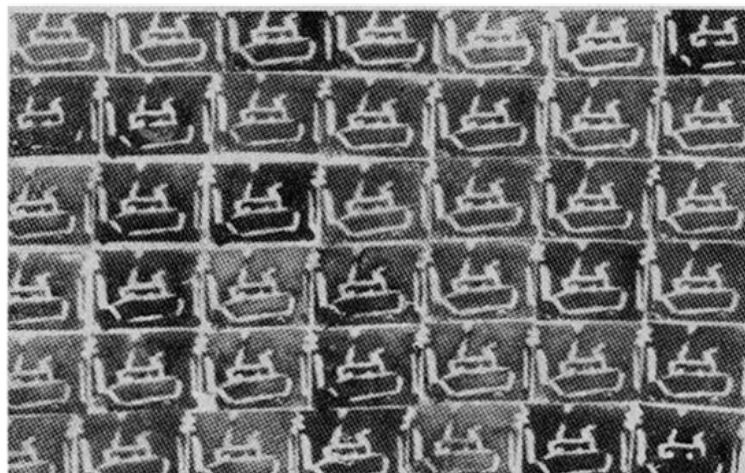
32. Picnic 8.6 G

This picture has a complete story of the picnic in which the artist had taken part. When asked, she enthusiastically gave a vivid description of what she had seen and experienced.



33. Horse rider 8 B

The artist's description: "The horse suddenly stopped and did his toilet". The dramatics of the happening must have impressed the child so much that its visual symbol was immediately created in his mind.



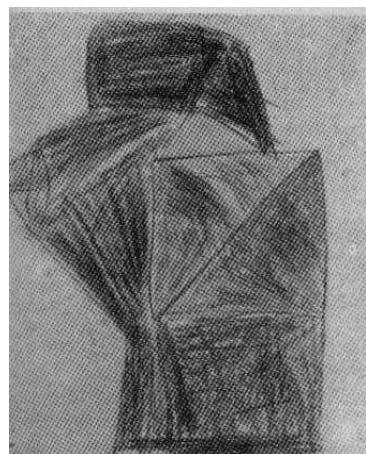
34. Potato print 8.1 B

Children like using a variety of mediums. Potato printing is good and simple for developing craftsmanship in children.



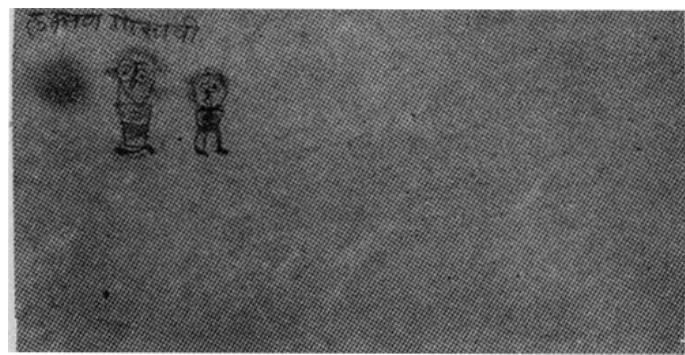
35. Shoulder race 9 G

This child was rather inactive in the art class. Once, on a sports day, she took part in the race. She must have felt so good about it that it became important for her to express her joy somehow. Not having the capacity and sufficient language of words, she rushed to the art class and painted this picture.



36. Playing with colours 9 B

Children like to play with colours. It is a very creative activity, but the teacher should be alert and see that it does not become routine. It could, though, be useful in learning pattern making and ornamental work.



37. 9.3 B

Making pictures as if it were writing, shows that the child is timid and his personality has remained oppressed. He has not yet developed any sense of space.



38. Bird(?) 9 B

The child first drew the snake and then the bird. He did not succeed in making the head of the snake well, but when he made the bird, its head became that of a snake - well drawn. It is clear that thoughts and images that want to be expressed do so in some way or the other.



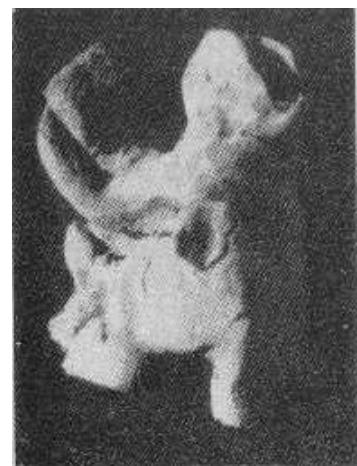
39. The Queen is angry 10 G

This child could not think of a topic for her painting. She was asked to recall a story that she found interesting. She thought of the queen who got angry, and decided to paint the picture.



40. Drill 10.6 B

This child was physically very smart and interested in sports.



41. The man reading newspaper 10.6 B

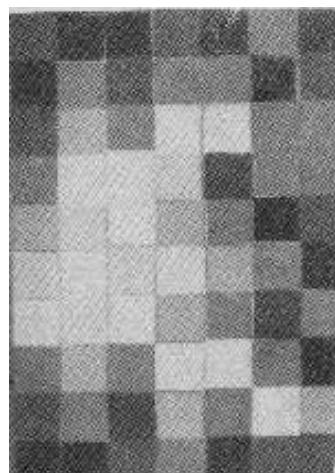


42. The King with his sword (clay) 10.6 B



43. The cotton carder 11.8 B 46.

The figure of the carder is a good mirror of the child's nature, adamant and self-determined.



44. Pattern 11 B

This child has some fine rectangular pieces of various coloured paper, which he used for making this interesting pattern. This kind of activity helps in working out different combinations of colour and space.



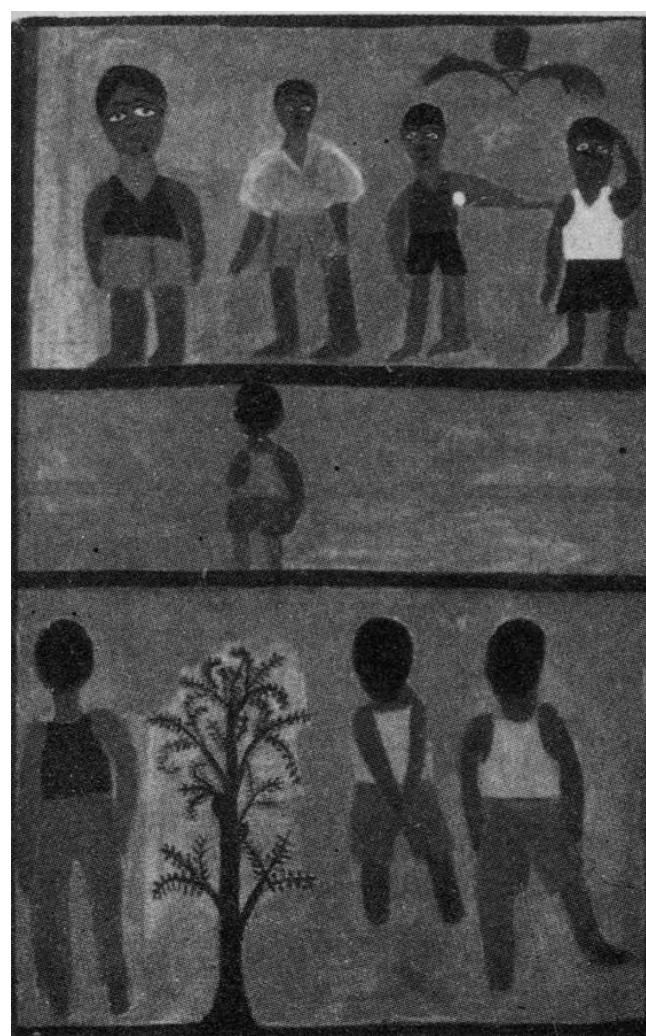
45. Poultry farming 11 B

Making pictures by sticking all kinds of material—paper, cotton, wool, pieces of plain or printed cloth, stimulates children's imagination.

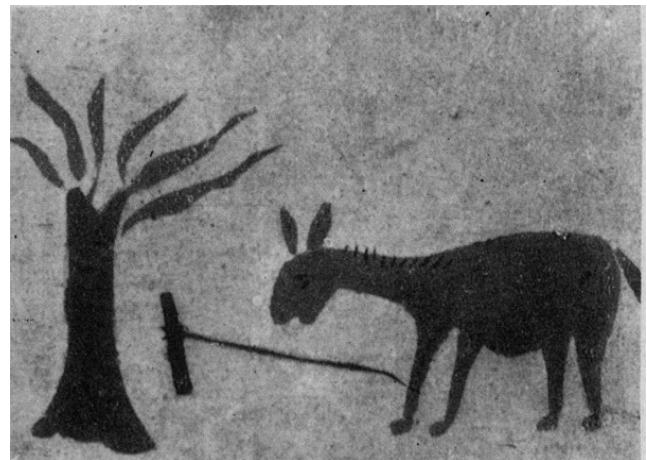


46. Drummer 12.6 G

Doing montage work with material, such as coloured paper, old newspaper, magazines, etc. and cloth can be of much interest to children. The material may be cut to the required shape with a pair of scissors or by simply tearing.



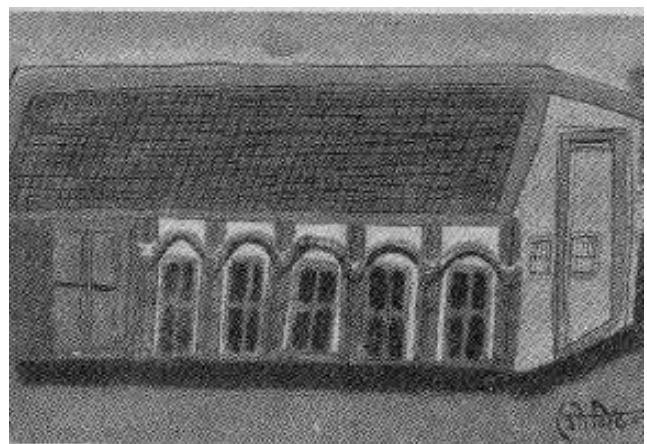
47. Kabaddi 12 G



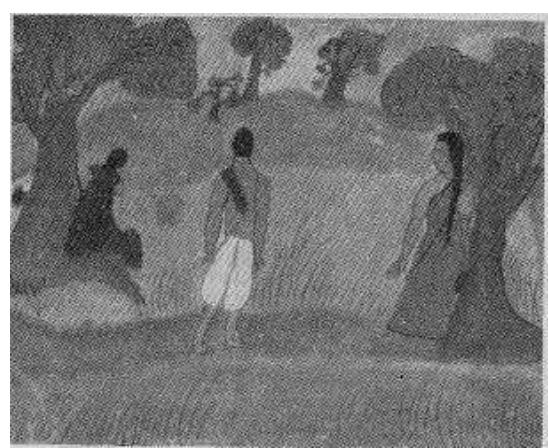
48. Donkey 13 B  
Stencil work is a good art medium, effective for self-expression.



49. Deer 14 B 50.  
This child is becoming more and more conscious about the realistic aspect of drawing. He wants to draw the joints of the legs of the animal but hesitates, for he still lacks the necessary knowledge and confidence.

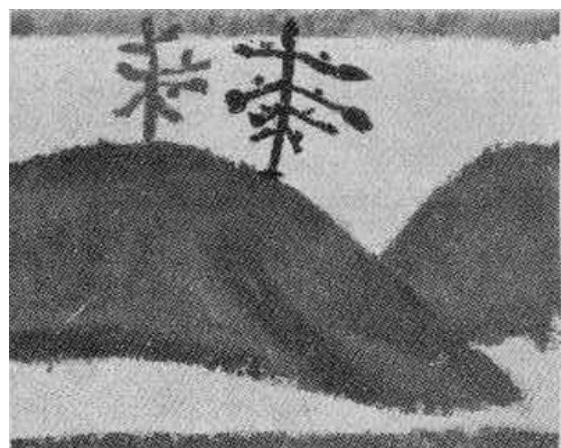


50. Hostel 14 B  
The child has started becoming aware of the third dimension. The stage of realism begins – he feels he need for perspective drawing.

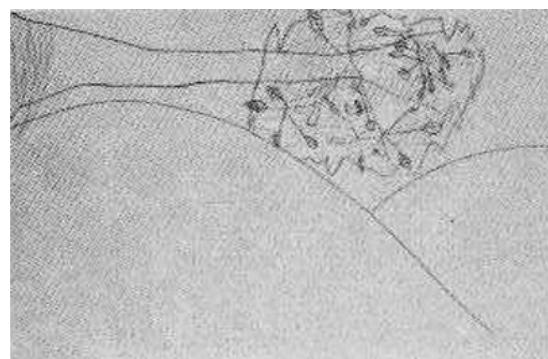


51. Going for a stroll 16 G

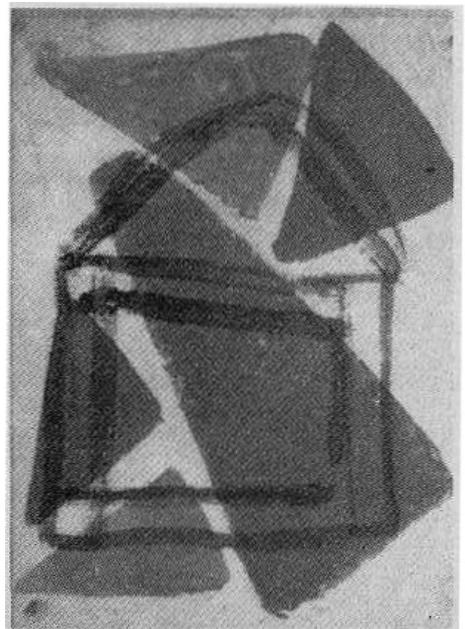
Coming of adolescence brings weakness in drawing, but, because of the continuous interest in art activity, her sense of colour and space remains at a good level.



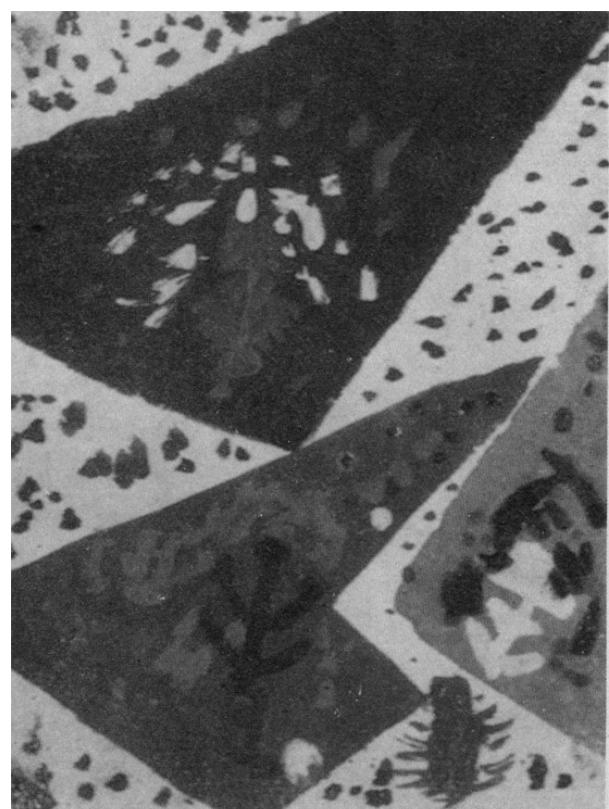
52. Second experiment (Please see chapter three)



53. Second experiment (Please see chapter three)



54. First experiment (Please see chapter three)



55. First experiment (Please see chapter three)

***Lino-cut prints*** (at the start of each chapter)

- |                         |        |
|-------------------------|--------|
| 1. Jackal the driver    | 14.6 B |
| 2. Deer                 | 12.6 B |
| 3. Banana tree          | 14 B   |
| 4. Back from the market | 13.4 B |
| 5. Lord Buddha          | 12 B   |
| 6. Girl in a garden     | 11.4 B |
| 7. My elder sister      | 9 B    |
| 8. Sculpture            | 11 B   |

## **Appendices**

The following three articles were published in Nayee Talim, the official monthly journal of Hindustani Talimi Sangh, the educational organization set up by Mahatma Gandhi to work out his scheme for the reconstruction of education in India. These articles were written on the basis of many discussions I had with colleagues in Sevagram and groups of teachers from different parts of the country. While planning the contents of this book some colleagues suggested that the inclusion of these articles in it would be particularly useful. Although much of what has been written in these articles has already been discussed in various contexts. I felt that these three needed individual attention.

### **I**

#### **Why isn't Copying Advisable?**

It was one of the weekly Teachers' meetings at the Sevagram school. The topic, Child Art, was on the agenda.

A class teacher asked me a question: "Why don't you allow children to copy from other pictures? "

I asked: "Copy from what kind of pictures? "

"Copy from good paintings. From paintings which represent natural proportions and knowledge of perspective drawing. If children paint in that manner they will be able to learn quickly and their pictures also will be good. After all, don't they say children learn by imitation! "

I was almost instantaneously reminded of Franz Cizek's words: "Child Art is an art, which only the child can produce. There is something that the child can also perform, but that we do not call art. It is imitation, it is artificial." I said to the teachers gathered there: "Yes, most educationists say that children learn by imitation. But, when I try to understand the way teachers interpret the concept of imitation I say to myself that it is a wrong concept. Generally, teachers forget that the child is an independent being. He is not a machine that can only imitate. He is not a parrot. He is an individual complete in himself or herself. It is wrong to think that the child is incomplete in himself or herself. We have now learnt that the child is not a 'miniature adult'. Children do not grow in the same manner as adults do, nor do they 'live' in the adult's world. Therefore, their activities are also different from those of the adults, and should be so. While thinking about the education of children, we ought to keep these facts in mind. They should be kept away from imitating as far as possible.

The notion and practice of copying from pictures made by adults forces children to enter prematurely into the world of adults and does not allow them to express their own feelings and experiences. If forced, enticed, or misled, very many children may, and often do, succeed in producing pictures similar to those of adults, but, as Cizek said, it will be artificial and not natural.

Art created by artists, or for that matter by children, is the product of their inner feelings and experiences. They see their world with their own eyes, experience it with their own senses and feelings. The art work produced by the child is his expression of the way he knows the world, which creates symbols and forms typical of childhood. These forms and symbols are the alphabets of his art language, which should be the criteria for judging Child Art. Only a person who understands the art language of the child can judge the work of children's paintings, sculptures or artefacts.

Whereas, the art language of the adult is the result of his visual observations, in some cases, oriented by the intellect, the child's language of forms is the product of the experiences of his total personality. They are both unique in themselves and cannot be compared or equated with each other. The child draws what he knows, but if the child draws as the adult does, it will not be natural. We should always remember the fact that it is only at the time of entering the stage of adolescence that a child starts seeing the work. Before reaching that stage, it will not be conducive to the growth of the child.

The art forms that children perceive go on changing with their growth. If a child goes on having new experiences in a natural manner within his own world, his art forms, symbols and so on also continue evolving accordingly. To put it differently, a child's personality growth can be judged well by the pictures he makes and the forms he uses in making them. Art activities of children have their diagnostic value too.

Just think, what would be the relationship of the work produced by children, if they imitated adult art at variance with their own inner experiences. Wouldn't one major aspect of their personality remain unexpressed, rather suppressed? Even if you ignore the child's artistic creativity, he will be totally deprived of his major means of communication. That part of him will remain 'unlived'.

The ambition of parents and teachers in their desire to make their children imitate the work of adults is to see that they learn to draw pictures with 'correct' perspective and proportions. There is no doubt that someone who wants to become an artist has to take some kind of training. However, to be able to succeed in his pursuit, a person has to have the right aptitude and will grow with age. At the same time, it is necessary for us to realize that the character and purpose of Child Art is basically different from the purpose and character of the work produced by artists. The most important contribution of Child Art is to help in the holistic development of the child's personality. Art experiences are important from the point of view of the child's mental growth as well as aesthetic sense. Such an objective can possibly be achieved only if based on children's natural aptitude for art. Forms experienced by adults are completely out of place in the context of Child Art.

If the child is allowed and encouraged to climb his own ladder of growth, he will reach the stage of adulthood, when he can make the choice, whether to continue art activities or do something else. If he chooses to continue with art it will no more be Child Art. It will develop into adult art. He will then be entering the world of the adult, in which art is treated in different ways and for different purposes. Teachers should realize that an individual, who has had a well fulfilled childhood will be more successful and happy with whatever he or she chooses to do.

The teacher is like a gardener, who goes on looking after the plants, keeping them free from insects, diseases, feeding them with elements necessary for their healthy growth,. He will never expect a flower to bloom before it is ready for it. His effort is always to let the plants grow at their natural pace. It is the same with a good teacher; his responsibility is to help the child by removing the hurdles in a natural manner from his path of growth.

Children want to have new experiences all the time. If they come across something that they have not yet seen they will certainly notice it. This is not imitation. It is not like a monkey's effort to imitate human beings. They are very much like the artist, who sees something interesting, studies it, and then recreates it in his own way. The concept that children learn from imitation should be interpreted in the same way as an artist's way of creativity. They see a new thing, study it, examine it and if they like to do so, they recreate it in their own manner.

## Children are also Artist

Who would have imagined hearing such a sentence about three quarters of a century ago? But today, we are able to say that every child is an artist by birth. At that time, a child who picked up a pencil from his brother's bag and scribbled with it on some surface, paper or a wall, would have received a good smacking for 'ruining the pencil and paper as well as time'. It was true not only for one country, but most probably for all countries.

Today, looking at these examples of self-expression of the child, many people say: "How beautiful!" But at that time they were mere useless scribbling. Some of these scribbling would have been the objects of envy for artists like Paul Lee and Matisse!

Today, some psychologists believe that artistic creativity is an essential step in the direction of the full development of the child's personality. They are convinced that art education should be an integral part of children's education. There is also very little difference of opinion regarding the pattern of art education of the child. The principle behind the approach is that children should have freedom to express their feelings and experiences. In other words, as Franz Cizek, the originator of this concept of Child Art, said, the real education of the child is what he receives from his own experiences and self-expression.

Unfortunately, even today, not all teachers understand Franz Cizek's approach. His approach was that of the artist, according to which Child Art has its own importance as Art. We do not judge primitive and folk art by classical standards. In the same way Child Art too ought not to be judged by the adult's standards. We do not give importance to Child Art because we think that it is equal to the great examples of art and has the same qualities. Nonetheless, it has to be admitted that Child Art also has some of the essential qualities of good art, composition, a good colour sense, etc.

Some people see similarities in Child Art and primitive art, which is true to some extent. Similar to primitive art, children's art does not depict visually correct forms. Primitive art is symbolic; so is Child Art. Until the child has become grown up enough to be able to learn the language of words, the only language he has is that of forms through which he communicates his feelings and experiences. The same is true, in a way, of the art of the primitive man. Both are pictorial languages and satisfy a powerful urge to express feelings and dreams.

A study of the art of the prehistoric culture shows another similarity between the two. Both do not see the whole object but depict only those parts of it which have relevance to their communication requirements or those parts, which have given them the inspiration to paint. For instance, a child made a picture of his teacher, in which his beard, spectacles and the wrist watch were larger than his head. Prehistoric paintings too show only those parts which are most relevant to the theme of the painting.

There may be a difference of opinion regarding the similarity of Child Art and primitive art. My purpose in writing about it is, in a way, a plea for treating Child Art as a genuine form of art. Giving it the importance I am asking for is not because I want adults to be kind and encouraging to children. I believe that some examples of children's work will only enhance the quality of a display of painting by great masters, old and contemporary, and of folk art objects.

Child Art is not to be placed at par with great examples of art, mainly because it does not have the spiritual quality that classical and great contemporary art has. Nevertheless, Child Art has great aesthetic value; and it has the power to build happy and well fulfilled personalities. It can be understood only if it is seen as Art.

### III

## Illustrated Literature for Children

The occasion was a teachers workshop on the practical role of child art in education and the correct approach to art teaching. One of the participants asked: "Do you mean that the illustrations we see in books for children are all of the wrong kind? What then do you think they should be like?"

Today, the common belief is that books written for children should be profusely illustrated. So, even before writing the text for the book, the prospective author approaches some of the available book-illustrators for the purpose. Publishers refuse to produce any literature for children, which does not have a large number of pictures in it. It has become a commercial proposition for authors and a matter of executing the author's orders by the artist. At the moment, I have in mind only the children's literature published in Indian languages. The effort is to have minimum number of words, and maximum number of pictures.

I believe that there are two major reasons behind having illustrated literature for children. Both are equally important. Firstly, the purpose of illustrating children's books is to make the child experience the subject matter with the help of the ear as well as the eye. It is believed that the task is to "translate" the language of words into the visual language. But that is not sufficient, the two languages, of words and of forms, instead of being replaceable with each other, are mutually complementary. For instance, some elements of the "story" can be expressed with the help of words and some others only visually. In other words, the purpose of pictures is not to "translate", but to add to what is experienced through words. A story told in pictures is ideal for children, who have not yet entered the world of words. Children, who have learnt to read, need book-illustrations for the sake of experiencing those elements of the story or the text, which words cannot provide. Experiences, thus received, become richer, as well as retainable for a much longer period.

The second purpose is related to aesthetics. A picture, drawing, painting or photograph, wherever it may be seen, on the wall, on a calendar, in an album or a book, must be aesthetically of a good standard. One of the major objectives of having pictures is to provide an aesthetic experience to the reader. This kind of experience is crucial in the development of the aesthetic sense of the child. And, because more and more children are getting an increasing number of books to read, it is important that the illustrations in them are of good quality.

Book illustrations for telling stories should also be of the same quality. The point here is that the two aspects are interrelated and the importance of neither ought to be under-rated. Although the story telling side of illustrating children's literature is receiving some attention, the aesthetical aspect is not only being ignored, it is being banned by cheap taste. What is needed is that kind of stimulant, that will help in the development of the intellect and the aesthetic taste at the same time.

In situations where good artists are not available for the purpose, it can be equally appropriate to use good quality photographs. Photography today has advanced so much that the aspect of story-telling can be accomplished more effectively by using it than by having second rate paintings. Aesthetically, too, photography has great potential.

There is another, equally good and effective, alternative. It is the use of classical masterpieces of art. They are so vast in subject matter that almost every situation can be described by using them selectively. Additionally, their aesthetic quality can surely be of great value.

Lastly, my special suggestion is that children make their own illustrated literature as part of their educational programme. After all, why should the children not fulfil their own need according to their understanding and capacity! I am making this suggestion on the basis of our own experience at the

Sevagram school. In one of the projects, six children had produced books with titles such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, Child Krishna and lives of the saints, Gyaneshwar, Sakhubai, Meera. They did the necessary research for collecting the material—stories, anecdotes, poems and songs written by the saints, wrote the final pages in good calligraphy, illustrated the important topics, decorated each page individually, bound their own books, and one of them even devoted the back-side of the binding to "Our publications"-listing all the six books. All this was done on handmade paper. If our school children can do it, why can't all the children in all the schools everywhere!

For more details of the Sevagram project of children producing their own illustrated books see chapter two.

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